

September 26, 2025

Dear Stephenson Families,

I am writing to provide clarity regarding the district's decision not to serve lunch on half-day school days. Please know that every decision we make—whether related to academics, extracurriculars, staffing, or food service—is made only after careful research, thoughtful consideration, and a focus on what is best for students and families in our community.

Why Lunch Will Not Be Served on Half Days

When reviewing this matter, we first examined student participation in lunch on half days. Data showed that very few middle and high school students chose to eat lunch, and our elementary students—who eat breakfast earlier in the morning—were generally not ready for another meal as early as 10:30 a.m. As a result, the amount of food waste and financial loss was significant.

We also explored whether food could be sent home with students. Unfortunately, because our food service program is federally funded and subject to strict regulations and audits, we are not permitted to allow meals to leave the building.

How We Are Supporting Students

To ensure students are well supported on half days, we are implementing the following changes:

- **Enhanced Breakfast:** Students will now receive a more substantial, full-service breakfast instead of a smaller grab-and-go meal. This will provide them with the energy to stay focused throughout the half-school day.
- **Snacks in Classrooms:** At the elementary level, teachers will have the option to bring snacks or small grab-and-go items back to classrooms for students who may need something additional before dismissal.

This approach not only helps bridge the gap between school dismissal and arriving home, but it also provides needed support for families.

Benefits of This Change

In addition to reducing waste, this adjustment allows us to use district resources more responsibly and allows us to support a larger number of students. By doing so, we can better address a broader range of needs across our school.

Next Steps

We understand that changes like this may bring questions, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you. If you would like to talk further about this decision, please do not hesitate to reach out. I would be glad to meet with you.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we work together to provide the best possible educational experience for your children.

Jerry Sardina



Superintendent
Stephenson Area Public Schools