



Hastings on Hudson UFSD

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August 29, 2025

Dear Hillside Families,

As part of this year's New York State budget, Governor Hochul allocated funding for schools participating in the Federal School Lunch Program to provide free meals to all students. Hastings has not previously participated in this program due to lack of eligible participants. The new NYS Law provides far greater flexibility for districts such as Hastings.

At Board of Education meetings in June 2025, we shared that the District would pursue this opportunity at Hillside Elementary, as the program closely mirrors the federal requirements and could be implemented within a very limited timeframe. To participate, we are required to go through a formal application process and conduct a competitive bid to secure a vendor. Just last week, Whitsons was the low-bidder and, as required was awarded the contract to operate the Hillside cafeteria, replacing Chartwells. We have been working diligently to ensure the new program is ready to launch when school opens on September 2.

It is important to note that while New York State is supplementing the cost of meals, this funding only applies to schools participating in the Federal School Lunch Program. Several districts in Westchester, including our own Middle School and High School, are not currently part of the program and therefore will not be offering free meals at this time. To make the shift at this late date would have required major changes to the menu offerings for the approximately 1,100 students, as well as staff, who use the Farragut Complex cafeteria.

We will use this year to evaluate how the program operates at Hillside and will revisit the possibility of expanding to the Farragut Complex for the 2026-27 school year. In the meantime, we are thrilled to provide this important benefit to Hillside families.

Hillside Breakfast & Lunch Program Details

Beginning this year, both breakfast and lunch will be offered free of charge to all Hillside students through our new partnership with [Whitsons Food Services](#). Please select Hastings-on-the-Hudson through the link. The menu and food ingredients are available. Please note that in addition to a hot meal, there are other items offered daily as listed on the menu.

- **Breakfast:** Served daily between 7:40 a.m. and 8:10 a.m. in the cafeteria. Students may choose to participate each morning.
- **Lunch:** Families will no longer need to pre-order meals in advance. Students will now select their lunch each day at school. Every student who receives a meal must come through the lunch line so the meal can be recorded by the cashier as required by NYS. Each student will have an **account card linked to their school PIN** (the same PIN

students already use in school) to help make this process smooth and efficient. This ensures that every meal is properly captured under the student's account, which is a program requirement.

- **Allergies & Adjustments:** We understand this is a considerable change, especially for families with children who have allergies. In the first few weeks, you may prefer to send a lunch from home until your child becomes familiar with the program and menus.
- All payments (for additional items outside the free meal program, including a second meal) should be made online through [My Payment Plus](#), as cash will not be accepted at the school.

Question	Contact	Email
• Food ingredients	Rick Emery Allison Rosado	emeryr@whitsons.com rosadoa@whitsons.com
• Food Service Operations • Setting up an account • MyPayment Plus Account Questions	Maureen Caraballo, Business Official and Nick Macri, Deputy Treasurer	caraballom@hohschools.org macrin@hohschools.org
• General Cafeteria Rules and Routines	Michael LaRocco, Assistant Principal	laroccom@hohschools.org
• Hillside Health Office	Nurse Mullen	mullenu@hohschools.org

We encourage you to speak with your child about school lunch and review the menus online. Any food allergies, sensitivities or intolerances should also be shared with the school nurse.

Warmly,

Maureen Caraballo - Business Official