

## Local Schools



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# Dinner Offered for FREE to Students at all School Sites

OCTOBER 23RD 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, MO - Free dinner meals are being served either to go or on-site after school beginning today, in a district-led food service effort to reach more students.

Poplar Bluff's food service director, Dixie Harden of Chartwells, has been making arrangements with principals since September in order for her staff to accommodate the specific needs of each building.

Early Childhood, Eugene Field, Lake Road, Oak Grove and Junior High students will receive bagged meals to go, while students participating in after-school activities such as clubs, sports or latch-key at Kindergarten, O'Neal, Middle School and High School will have an option to eat their meals on-site.

“Meal participation rates have been down tremendously, and this is a way to meet a need for both our students and the community,” stated Dr. Amy Jackson, R-I assistant superintendent of business

The district's participation rate has been impacted by students quarantined due to contact tracing. In addition, about 15 percent of the population had enrolled in the Poplar Bluff Virtual Academy for the first quarter. The virtual learners have also been given the option to pick up meals at one of the district's three curbside sites: O'Neal, Middle School or the High School.

The United States Department of Agriculture has issued a series of waivers under the federal nutrition assistance program, and recently announced that free meals for students, grades preK-12, will be extended through the end of the school year to help combat hunger during the public health emergency.

“There are a lot of people still struggling, I mean really struggling, and I don’t want our kids to go hungry, basically,” Harden explained. “Amy’s helped and Dr. Scott Dill,” superintendent, "is always on board, when it comes to feeding kids; it's just imperative that we do."

For more information about dinner services, contact the individual school building, or call Chartwells at 573-785-0486.

Pictured: O’Neal Elementary students participating in Boys and Girls Club or latch-key line up for dinner when the after-school meal service was first introduced at select sites one year ago.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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