

PALATINE HIGH SCHOOL KITCHEN RENOVATIONS WILL MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY, SERVE MORE STUDENTS



Upcoming summer renovations at Palatine High School include several updates that will modernize the school building and increase operational efficiency for both students and staff.



Some of the larger renovations include the kitchen, cafeteria, and faculty dining room, which have not been updated since the school opened in the late 1970s. Although there are several reasons to update the kitchen based on maintenance and equipment, the layout and functionality for students and staff is a top priority.

“As it is currently set up, the kitchen at Palatine High School has a very inefficient floor plan for workflow,” said Lauren Hummel, director of food services in High School District 211. “We are trying to serve the largest number of students that we can and be able to feed them a nutritious meal in a quick manner. This renovation will help us achieve that goal.”

From an operational standpoint, renovations will include moving serving lines into the center of the kitchen so staff is able to feed students faster, as well as relocating the dish room. The goal is to keep everything as central as possible in the kitchen for optimum efficiency.

For example, currently the PHS kitchen is long, and cooks need to walk with hot pans of food in opposite directions because this layout doesn’t allow staff to work in an ordered process. This order consists of cooking, followed by food and tray set-up, and then serving food to students and staff in a central area of the kitchen. Having a layout where staff can work in a straight line or order would eliminate staffing redundancies, help speed up the serving process, and eliminate safety and efficiency concerns.

Palatine High School has the largest number of students in District 211 that are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, and it is the second busiest school in cafeteria food sales. The renovation will allow staff to serve more students within the same amount of time by increasing food capacity and layout. Additionally, those lines will allow for more cold food options, such as fruits and vegetables, by building food storage cases into the lines.

Students also will have access to a new “Grab and Go” line that will essentially utilize deli cases built into the kitchen to serve students who are looking for fast meal options. Food options will allow students to build a complete lunch by selecting

various lunch components in the line, providing a quicker point-of-sale and freedom for them to choose their meal.

“We will be able to offer more variety in our food lines, including our ‘Grab and Go’ section, which I am very excited to see,” Hummel said. “From an operational standpoint, I am excited to see the dish room relocated so staff can better utilize that area to serve students.”

Additionally, the school will eliminate use of concession carts for miscellaneous food items. Alternative areas will be built where students can purchase similar items from a staff member, but will not require staff to transport items to a different location in the cafeteria.

“When we do a renovation, we expect it to last for a very long time,” Hummel said. “Of course we will have to repair and replace things here and there, but when we design our kitchens we try to keep things as flexible as possible because who knows what 30 years from now will be like. We try to be flexible in our equipment and design to be able to adjust to regulatory and operational changes.”