



**Letter From Dorothy - Fall 2009
RINR & Assistance from Kids First**

**Hello Everyone,
This Fall, Rhode Island is leading the way in serving healthier school lunches to our students! As mandated by the RI Board of Regents, RINR (Rhode Island Nutritional Requirements) are in effect for all school districts as of September 2009. This means that school meals (Breakfast, Lunch and After School Snacks, served as part of the USDA Child Nutrition Programs) are going to look better, taste better and be healthier for our RI school children.**

To help ensure the success of RINR, The RI Department of Education has contracted with Kids First (funding is provided by a USDA Team Nutrition Grant) to help implement the changes that will be seen on plates this school year. What does that mean for Rhode Island schools? It means that lunchroom staff will receive targeted assistance for their cafeteria and their school community. It means that Kids First staff and professional chefs will help promote, educate and market the RINR menu changes so that students, staff, administration and parents all gain enthusiasm for the increased amounts of fruits, vegetables (RI grown as much as possible!), whole grains and legumes that will be served.

The nutritional guidelines for our state's school meals are a significant step in the nationwide push to improve school food. RINR was developed based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (<http://www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/>). RINR takes the nutritional requirements of the USDA's National School Lunch Program several significant steps forward to make available and encourage the consumption of more fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, more legumes and less sodium (perhaps less highly processed food?!) RINR exceeds the federal nutritional requirements for school meals. It also strongly encourages the purchase of RI grown produce through the RI Farm to School program. This is a direct way to help our local economy as well as educate our children about how and where food grows and why RI farms provide the freshest and tastiest fruits and vegetables.

I encourage everyone to visit their school cafeteria this Fall to see (and taste!) firsthand how RINR has changed the school lunches for the better. The entire staff and I at Kids First welcome your comments and observations about your school district's meals. Email or call us to let us know how RINR is working or how it may not be working well just yet, how we might be able to help build enthusiasm for the menu changes or how you'd like to help spread the message within your community about your new school food! It will take all of us working together to successfully implement RINR in every school for every RI child. As we all know, change is difficult, it takes time to get it right and make it GREAT, but our children are so worth the effort!

Welcome back to a new - and healthier - school year!

Dorothy Brayley

Executive Director