

What's New with School Meals?

Talking Points:

Background:

- Starting in the 2012-13 school year major positive changes are happening in school meal programs based on new requirements from the United States Department of Agriculture. This is great news for our kids because they will have healthier meals!
- USDA released new nutrition standards in January 2012 reflecting the recommendations included in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010.
- These changes will help students be ready to learn and will contribute to a lifetime of health.

Major Changes:

- Main entrées will come in three different sizes to meet calorie ranges based on grades: Kindergarten-5th grade, 6th-8th grade and 9th-12th grade.
- Students must take a fruit or vegetable on their tray to count as a complete meal.
- We will be providing more variety and servings of fruits and vegetables, like broccoli and squash and legumes. These fruits and vegetables are tasty and packed with vitamins and minerals kids need.
- More whole grain foods like will be served. Whole grains play an important role in lowering risks for heart disease, diabetes and cancer and long-term health.
- Milk choices will include plain, low-fat or fat-free milk or flavored fat-free milk.
- School meals will contain less salt, no trans fats and less saturated fat, helping prevent disease.

What We Are Already Doing:

Over the past few years, our district has made many changes that are now required nationally. We have already have been offering:

- A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables every day
- Milk options including fat free or 1% unflavored milk and fat-free flavored milk
- Besides milk, healthy beverages including water and 100% fruit and vegetable juices
- Whole grain rich foods, such as bread and pasta
- Lower salt (sodium) foods and foods high in fiber

Our District's Initiatives:

- We are sourcing and bringing fresh, local produce to our cafeterias
- We are working with local chefs to develop delicious new menu items
- We are incorporating ethnic and regional favorite foods into menus and offer our Cultural Cuisine program for family style meals in classrooms
- Some of our schools are participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program

Strategies to Promote within District:

- We ask everyone to help promote school meals – If all school staff are positive about school meals, it will help with student perception and participation.
- We encourage all school staff to maximize their positive influence by enjoying eating school meals with students.
- We support time within the busy school day for kids to stop and eat a balanced meal.
- We support scheduling recess before lunch – according to research findings students eat better, waste less food, and are able to focus on learning when recess is before lunch.