



New School Meal Requirements

You may have heard that there will be new requirements for school meals. Most of the new rules will begin for school year 2012-2013. Knowing what changes were likely to take place we have gradually been making changes so it wouldn't be such a shock to the students when the new requirements went into effect.

Biggest Changes:

- Students will now be **required** to have a serving of fruit and vegetables on their tray for it to count as a full meal. I plan to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables daily to give students more to select from.
- The amount of food and calories offered at each meal will be based on three different age groups, grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. This will be controlled by portion sizes and recipes will be designed to meet the specific age groups.
- We need to offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit to grades K-8 and 1 cup of fruit to grades 9-12.
- We need to offer $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegetables to grades k-8 and 1 cup of vegetables to grades 9-12.
- We are now limited as to how much meat/meat alternate and grains we can offer. Previously, we only had a minimum to meet, but could offer more. Now we have to stay within the specified ranges for calories for each age group. This means main entrees may not be as large as they have been (in reality it will be $\frac{1}{2}$ of last year's offerings) and no second helpings will be allowed with entrees; only fruit and vegetables. Remember though, that there are more fruits and vegetables available than before. I will be more creative to make this work but have no doubt we can come up with a meal plan the students will enjoy.

Changes We Have Already Made:

- Half of all grains offered must be whole grain rich. Almost all of our grains offered already meet this requirement.
- We must offer vegetables from the following groups each week: dark green, orange/red, beans, starchy, and other vegetables. We've been working towards this goal with the introduction of the salad bar which contains fresh vegetables of all colors. The newest items will be soups and low fat dressings.
- Schools have until 2014 -2015 to meet the first level of sodium limits (1200-1400mg dependent on age group). While this might be quite a challenge, we are very close to these limits now. Food manufacturers are gradually working in offering foods for schools with lower sodium contents.
- The Students will have more choices with meals. Cereal and or an entrée will be offered for breakfast and choice of hot line food or salad bar (with all meal requirements offered) or combination of both will be available for lunch. The same ***Offer vs. Serve*** rules will apply

How Can You Help?

- Encourage your children to try new things at home and school.
- Review and discuss the school menu together.
- **Advise the school of any food allergies your child may have!**
- If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact us. We are here to help!