



New School Meal Requirements

You may have heard that there will be new requirements for school meals. Most of these new rules will begin for the school year 2012-2013. Knowing what changes were likely to take place, the Columbus ISD Child Nutrition Department has already been gradually making many of these changes so it wouldn't be such a shock to the students when they were finally required.

Biggest Changes:

- Students grades 9-12 will now be required to have 1 cup of fruit or vegetables & 3/4 cup for lower grades, on their tray for it to count as a full meal. Anything less than a full meal is charged at a la carte prices. We plan to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables daily to give the students more to select from
- There will be three different age groups; K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Before, we only had two age groups which left some of the younger students with way too much food. You'll see that on the menus, many of our items are the same, but portion sizes and recipes will be designed to meet the specific age groups.
- We are now limited as to how much meat/meat alternate (cheese, yogurt, etc.) and grains we can offer. Previously, we only had a minimum to meet, but could offer no more. Now we have to stay within the specified ranges for each age group. This means main entrees may not be as large as they have been. Remember, though, that there are more fruits and vegetable available than there have been. We'll have to be a little creative to make this work, but have no doubt that we can make each meal something our students will enjoy.

What We're Already Doing:

- 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, and legumes. We then have the option to include starch and other vegetables. We've been working towards this goal by serving fresh veggie trays with low-fat, homemade ranch dressing, fresh, steamed broccoli, switching all lettuce to romaine, offering legumes, and a variety of other vegetables during the week.
- Schools have until 2014-2015 to meet the first level of sodium limits. While this might be quite a challenge for some districts, we come very close right now. We expect as manufacturers reformulate some of their products to bring down sodium levels that it will not be a problem to meet this requirement as all. We've been able to accomplish this by using only fresh frozen vegetables, as canned usually will have more sodium. We also make our own spaghetti sauce.

How You Can Help:

- Encourage your children to try new things at home and school.
- Join your child for lunch and/or breakfast anytime.
- If you have question or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We are here to help!