

Dear parents,

Hello from the school kitchen! We, the food service directors, Suzanne and Jill, are already planning meals, cleaning the kitchen, and preparing to serve your children delicious and nutritious meals. We have also been busy completing training required for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which our school will be participating in this year. Since this is new for our school, here are some of the basics:

**How does the NSLP work?** Schools taking part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and USDA foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children. We encourage parents to sign up, as even those who do not meet the income requirements for free or reduced price lunches are still subsidized to some extent.

**What are the nutritional requirements for school lunches?** School lunches must meet meal pattern and nutritional standards set by the latest *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. We are required to make meals each day that contain these 5 basic components:

1. Meat/Meat alternative (1-2 oz per day)
2. Grains/Breads (whole grain rich—must contain at least 50% whole grains—1-2 oz per day)
3. Vegetables (3/4-1 cup per day including a required amount of dark green leafy and red-orange vegetables per week)
4. Fruit (1/2 to 1 cup per day)
5. Milk (skim or 1%--1 cup per day)

To qualify as a reimbursable meal, a student must take each of these components in the amounts specified, based on their age group. In addition these dietary guidelines must be adhered to:

1. Calories (must range from 600 to 700 calories for K-8 and 750 to 850 for 9-12)
2. Sodium (must stay at or below 1360mg for k-8 and 1420mg for 9-12)
3. Saturated Fat (less than 10% of calories must derive from saturated fat)
4. Trans Fat (Not allowed!)

#### **Offer VS Serve**

In order to help cut down on food waste, we will be participating in Offer vs. Serve. The full amount of each component must be available to each student for a reimbursable meal. It is the student's choice of which item(s) to decline—not the school's. Students must take *at least* 3 of 5 components and one component *must* be ½ cup fruit or vegetable. Sound confusing? It will be in the beginning but the students will soon know and understand the requirements.

**Can my child get seconds?** We will have some seconds available, but they no longer can be offered free of charge. Purchased seconds do not need to fall within the same requirements. We are still working out those details.

**What if my child has allergies or other food sensitivities?** If this is the case, we will need a signed statement from a qualified medical authority. Please keep that in mind as your children are getting their sports physicals.

We ask that you will be patient with us as we develop and adapt recipes that comply with the meal pattern standards. Some of this will be a bit of trial and error, and we realize you may have some

questions. Please feel free to contact Jill or Suzanne if there is any confusion, as we covered only the very basics in this letter. As time goes along, we hope to implement a system where the students can rate meals to help us know how to best serve them. We are looking forward to seeing their smiling faces at lunch time, and will do our best to provide non-processed, nutritious and tasty meals that meet Federal requirements in a home-cooked from scratch kind of way.