

## Frequently Asked Questions About School Lunch

### 1. How are the menus planned?

Menus are planned to provide students an opportunity to select nutritious foods that will contribute to good health and students will enjoy eating. Purchasing history as well as future trends is also used for planning and purchasing purposes, in keeping with the FDA nutrition guidelines. Input from students is also utilized to add menu options. As students advance from elementary through middle school to high school, the available choices increase.

### 2. Are school meals healthy?

Yes! Menus are required to meet the [Healthy, Hunger- Free Kids Act of 2010](#) for key nutrients and calories for growing children. All foods served are steamed or oven baked to assure no additional fats are incorporated into the product. A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables are available daily in every school.

### 3. Can schools serve anything they want?

No, they cannot. The School District of Haverford Township participates in the government National School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs and must meet the meal pattern requirements of the [Healthy, Hunger- Free Kids Act of 2010](#). A basic meal provides the following:

1. Protein (meat/meat alternative)
2. Bread/Grain
3. Vegetable (fresh, cooked)
4. Fruit (fresh, canned, juice)
5. Milk (non-fat flavored or unflavored)

### 4. What is Offer vs. Serve?

Offer vs. Serve is a provision in the National School Lunch Program that allows students the option of selecting 3 of the 5 components to meet the minimum requirement for a complete lunch. We encourage students to take all 5 components for a well-balanced meal. Students must select a serving of fruit or vegetable.

Over the course of a week, breakfast is designed to supply approximately 1/4 of the protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C needed by the body. Lunch is designed to supply approximately 1/3 of the same nutrients. The nutritional value of the meals is evaluated over a period of a week rather than judged on a single meal or food item. The USDA identifies daily and weekly minimums and maximums for fat, saturated fat, sodium and calories.

The sale of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV) is prohibited in the food

service areas during the school meal periods per federal meal program regulations.

### **5. Why must milk be served with school lunch?**

Eight ounces or 1 cup of fluid milk is a required component of the school lunch pattern. No other beverage (juice, ice tea, or soda), nor food (ice cream, cottage cheese, or yogurt), can be substituted for this required component. A variety of milks are offered at each cafeteria – low fat (1% fat) plain, strawberry and chocolate, and skim plain.

Why low fat and skim milk?

Low fat and skim milk have a lower fat content consistent with the dietary guidelines to avoid too much fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet. When low fat or skim milk is offered, only the fat content changes. Low-fat or skim milk has all the calcium, Vitamin D, protein and all other nutrients as in a higher fat milk. The only thing missing is the fat and extra calories. Chocolate and strawberry milk are also low-fat products and are offered in elementary as well as secondary schools. Flavored milks have the same nutrients, as does plain milk.

[Information regarding children with special dietary needs in the School Nutrition Program can be found here.](#)

### **6. How are portion sizes determined?**

The government regulates the minimum size servings of the basic meal. Serving sizes are adjusted to meet the nutritional needs of students according to age. Meal prices are calculated based on the recommended serving sizes.

### **7. Do you offer a variety of meals?**

Yes! The USDA Processing Program allows school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program to contract with commercial food processors to receive a wider variety of products that meet individual district needs and local flavor profiles.

### **8. Why purchase a school meal?**

- Nutritious meals reflect the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines
- Food is prepared and served in a food safe environment
- Cost is less than brining an equally nutritious meal from home
- Several choices are available daily

### **9. How can parents make meal payments?**

[Parent Online](#) is a secure, online system that allows parents to make cafeteria meal payments to their child(ren)'s cafeteria accounts via credit or debit card. Parents can also email or call the Food Services department at (610) 853-5900 ext. 5522 to

transfer money from one child's account to another.

### **10. Can parents monitor their children's accounts?**

Parents can remotely monitor their children's accounts anytime from any Internet-enabled computer.

### **11. Can my child use their account to purchase snacks?**

Students can use their accounts to purchase extra items and snacks.

### **12. Can parents prohibit or limit the purchases extra items?**

If you do not want your child to purchase additional items, please let the food service manager at your school know, and limits will be placed on your child's account.

### **13. What are Smart Snacks?**

Since July 1, 2014, the US Department of Agriculture's [Smart Snacks in School rules](#) have required all foods and beverages sold separate from school meals to meet new nutrition standards. Often referred to as "**competitive foods**," because they are sold in competition to the complete reimbursable school meal, these items include entrees, sides, snacks or drinks sold during the school day in vending machines, snack bars and a la carte lines. The rules do not apply to food and beverages brought from home or sold during non-school hours, weekends or at off-campus events (e.g. concessions during sporting events and school plays).

#### **Under Pennsylvania Smart Snacks in Schools:**

Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value, or FMNV, as defined by USDA, will not be available during the school day.

Whenever a la carte foods are for sale:

- At least half of grains must be whole grain.
- A minimum of 3 fruits and 3 vegetables must be offered daily a la carte, and must be available in at least one vending area and in all vending areas where refrigerated vending is available.
- Foods offered through the NSLP and SBP may qualify toward this requirement if they are also for sale as a la carte items.

Vending machines must contain at least 50% of grains as whole grains.

Vending for elementary students must offer only fruit, vegetables, yogurt, low-fat yogurt, and reduced-fat cheese.

A la carte items that are not reimbursable meal components must be packaged in single-serving sizes and meet the PA standard criteria.