



New School Menu 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 St. Helens Student Nutrition Department has already been gradually making many of these changes so they won't be such a shock to the students when they are finally required.

Biggest Changes:

- Students will now be required to have $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit or vegetables 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 will offer a wider variety of fruits and vegetables daily to give the students more selection.
- 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 far too much food. You'll see that, while many of our menu items are the same, 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 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 vegetables available than there have been. We'll have to be a little creative to make this work, but have no doubt 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 starchy and other vegetables. We've already been reaching much of this goal by offering a variety of vegetables each week on our salad bars, and hot choices. We will increase our offerings within the vegetable subgroups.
- 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.

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 questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We're here to help!

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