

School Lunch Changes for the Better - USDA Releases New School Meal Pattern - More Healthy Choices Now Available!

Dear Allegheny Valley School District families,

The Allegheny Valley school cafeterias will continue to implement new meal pattern guidelines for school lunch, ensuring that meals are healthy, well-balanced and provide students the nutrition they need to succeed at school. School meals currently offer students milk, fruits and vegetables, proteins and grains, but now they must meet strict limits on saturated fat and portion size. The additional nutritional requirements started in 2012 and continuing for the 2020-2021 school years include:

- Age-appropriate calorie limits with trans-fat free food items
- A variety of fruits and vegetables will be served each day (students must take at least one serving of produce)
- Pre-plated salads and salad bars will provide vitamin-packed romaine lettuce and fresh spinach
- Fat-free or 1% milk
- More whole grains with hot and cold sandwiches offered on whole wheat bread products
- Other beverages offered will include unflavored water and 100% fruit juice
- Fried foods are being replaced by baked products to include baked chicken and baked white and sweet potato fries
- And less sodium as our cafeterias have altered recipes to lower sodium for entrees and vegetables

Over the next few months, we'll be building on the progress we've made and planning our menus to meet these new nutrition guidelines. We know how important it is to encourage students to accept and consume these healthier options. Our school nutrition staff has found great ways to get students excited about healthy food choices and we'll continue to work on creative solutions to ensure healthy foods appeal to students.

Most schools have offer-versus-serve which refers to the option children may be given to refuse up to two items offered as part of a federally subsidized school lunch or breakfast without the meal service operation losing the federal reimbursement for the meal. Offer-versus-serve consists of a minimum of five components: meat/meat alternate, vegetable, fruit, bread/grains, and milk. Students must select at least three components, at least one of which is a fruit or vegetable, in order to comply with state regulations. We'll face some challenges to meet all the new requirements on a tight budget, but our school nutrition program will ensure these healthy changes are made for our students. We hope parents will support this effort by encouraging their students to give the healthier meals a try. Students are far more likely to pick up a fruit or vegetable in the lunch line if they have been introduced to those foods at home.

Applying the new meal pattern guidelines to our menus will help provide your children a high quality, nutritious meal. We're always working to offer Allegheny Valley School District students healthier and delicious choices. School meals are a great value and a huge convenience for busy families too! Now is the perfect time to encourage your children to choose school lunch! We look forward to welcoming your children to the cafeteria this fall. To find out more about healthy school meals, pre-payment and on-line payment options, view menus and meal prices, or to apply for free or reduced price meals, visit us online at: www.avsdweb.org

A link to the Food Service Department is located under District Services menu tab on the home page.

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