

# DISTRICT 211 WELCOMES LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF NEW SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH REGULATIONS

The average high school student is incredibly busy. When the first school buses arrive at 7:00 a.m., students start to prepare for their day. Between homework, extra curricular activities, athletics, and an after school job, students are constantly on the go until late in the evening. For many District 211 students, home is a place where they can refuel and recharge by grabbing whole, healthy meals to power them through their busy day.

## **Food & Nutrition Services**



TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 211  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

However, there are many students who do not have access to adequate food sources at home for several reasons. Among District 211's 12,000-plus student population, more than 30 percent qualify for free and reduced meals due to economic hardship. When these students arrive at school, they often grab breakfast in the cafeteria, attend their challenging classes, stop back in the cafeteria for lunch, and finish their school day without knowing if they will have another meal before they arrive at school the next day. For many, school breakfast and lunch is their only option.

Through the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010, The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has encouraged schools to provide nutritious food for its students in hopes of changing unhealthy lifestyle habits and combat child obesity. Schools participating in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast (SBP) Programs receive federal and state reimbursements for meals that meet USDA guidelines. Although the HHFKA has been in place since 2010, significant changes enacted in 2014 will continue to transform the school meal programs. Menu items will now have lower fat levels, fewer calories, and primarily consist of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins. The updated guidelines will not only benefit all students, but also provide nourishment for those who do not have access to well-

balanced meals outside of school grounds.

As a school district that receives federal funds through its participation in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, Township High School District 211 will be implementing these major changes defined by the HHFKA throughout its entire food service program this coming fall, including snack items sold at school. During the 2013-2014 school year, the food service department served a total of more than 190,000 breakfast and 655,000 lunch meals, all of which provide state and federal reimbursement. Of those total meals served, 161,000 breakfasts and 390,000 lunches qualified as free and reduced meals.

Palatine and Hoffman Estates High Schools have successfully piloted the new standards through a revised menu program that meets USDA standards during the past school year. The District will begin district-wide implementation starting with the 2014-2015 school year. The updated menu provides students with the opportunity to choose from over 10 nutritious entrée items daily that meet strict USDA standards.

### **Township High School District 211 Food Services**



#### **Goal:**

*The High School District 211 Food Services staff is dedicated to providing the highest quality food and service for students and staff to enhance health, learning, and social environments in our schools.*

- ◆ Township High School District 211 operates one of the largest independent school food service programs in Illinois.
- ◆ More than 9,000 students participate in the lunch and breakfast programs each school day.
- ◆ District 211 provides over 190,000 breakfast meals and over 655,000 lunch meals annually.
- ◆ District-wide, there are 120 Food Services employees.
- ◆ All employees participate in safety and sanitation workshops.
- ◆ More than half of the Food Services staff has earned the Illinois Sanitation Certificate.

### **The Greatest Wealth is Health**



- ◆ Meals served under the NSLP (National School Lunch Program) must meet nutrition standards established by the USDA.
- ◆ Meals are less than 10% from saturated fat and contain zero grams of trans fat.
- ◆ All school lunch and breakfast meals are served with the choice of a minimum ½ cup portion of fruit or vegetables, or up to one cup of fruit and one cup of vegetables.
- ◆ Compared to average lunches from home, school lunches contain:
  - Three times as many dairy products
  - Twice as much fruit
  - Seven times as many vegetables
- ◆ School lunch participants have substantially lower intakes of added sugars than non-participants.

The pilot trial period implemented at both high schools was successful in providing more free and reduced priced meals and more healthy foods to students. There was a 7 to 10 percent increase in eligible Free and Reduced students who were eating school meals and an overall increase in meal participation by more than 250 students per day. These may have been students who were eating at school in the past but were choosing less nutritious à la carte options. The additional meals that District 211 served at Hoffman Estates and Palatine High Schools equates to increased access to fruits, vegetables, and dairy that students may not otherwise choose to buy with an à la carte purchase.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high cholesterol

or high blood pressure. In a recent study, 70 percent of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Additionally, the CDC states that schools play a particularly critical role by establishing a safe and supportive environment with policies and practices that support healthy behaviors. Schools also provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

While maintaining students' menu choices and food preferences, the District hopes to encourage healthy nutritional behaviors among students that will continue after graduation. Students can now combine an entrée with a choice of a cup of fruit, a cup of vegetables, and low fat milk to make a well-balanced meal. All grains will be whole grain-rich, including pizza crusts, pasta, rice, and breads.



*Palatine High School successfully piloted the new standards through a revised menu program that meets USDA standards during the past school year.*

“Providing students with a variety of healthy options is beneficial for their future,” said Mary O’Connor, District 211 director of food services. “The new regulations can be challenging, but they encourage creativity and growth in our program.”

To meet the USDA guidelines, District 211 has introduced new products and updated portion sizes. Students are encouraged to create a well-balanced meal at any serving line in the cafeteria. From the start of the pilot program, students at Palatine High School immediately noticed the increased variety of choices.

The most significant change students will see in the cafeteria next year will be the introduction of new guidelines -the Smart Snacks in Schools Regulation – which will impact all foods and beverages sold to students during the school day. In addition to the meal requirement updates, all available food items offered to students must comply with nutrition standards that meet specific sodium, fat, calorie, and sugar requirements. These requirements pertain to à la carte items sold in the cafeteria and in school vending machines, as well as any food products or snacks sold for school fundraisers.

In order for a food item to be sold in schools next year, a product must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be a “whole grain-rich” product; or
- Have as the first ingredient a fruit, vegetable, dairy product, or protein food; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of fruit and/or vegetable; or
- Contain 10 percent of the Daily Value of one of the nutrients of public health concern in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber); and
- Accompaniments, such as cream cheese, salad dressing, and butter must be included in the nutrient profile as part of the food item sold. This helps control the amount of calories, fat, sugar, and sodium added to foods by accompaniments, which can be significant.

However, food must also meet several nutrient requirements:

- Calorie limits:
  - o Snack items:  $\leq 200$  calories
  - o Entrée items:  $\leq 350$  calories
- Sodium limits:
  - o Snack items:  $\leq 230$  mg
  - o Entrée items:  $\leq 480$  mg
- Fat limits:
  - o Total fat:  $\leq 35$  percent of calories
  - o Saturated fat:  $\leq 10$  percent of calories
  - o Trans fat: zero grams
- Sugar limit:
  - o  $\leq 35$  percent of weight from total sugars in foods

High schools must meet nutrition standards for beverages, as well:

- Plain water (with or without carbonation);
- Unflavored low fat milk (maximum 12 oz. portion);
- Unflavored or flavored fat free milk and milk alternative permitted by the NSLP and NSBP;
- $\leq 12$  oz. of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice; and
- $\leq 12$  oz. of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation), and no added sweeteners.
- Calorie-free, flavored water (with or without carbonation);
- Flavored and/or carbonated beverages that contain  $<5$  calories per 8 fluid ounces or  $\leq 10$  calories per 20 fluid ounces; and
- Beverages with  $\leq 40$  calories per 8 fluid ounces, or  $\leq 60$  calories per 12 fluid ounces.

There also are exceptions to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, which apply to

fundraisers. These include:

- The sale of food items that meet nutrition requirements at fundraisers are not limited in any way under the standards;
- The standards do not apply during non-school hours, on weekends, and at off-campus fundraising events;
- The standards allow a special exemption for infrequent fundraisers that do not meet nutrition standards. The latest proposal from the Illinois State Board of Education states that a limited number of exception days will be allowed for fundraisers in which food items that do not meet the new standards can be sold to students. Experts have proposed that the number of exception days will be reduced from 36 days during the coming school year to only 9 days in the 2018-2019 school year.

During the 2013-2014 school year, all District 211 schools increased the availability of fruit and vegetables on their student cafeteria serving lines. Students have the ability to select more nutritious side items with a meal, such as seasonal fresh fruit cups, tossed romaine salad, steamed vegetables, and kale chips. Students may opt to take up to two cups of fruit and/or vegetables with each meal. Popular daily offerings include, sweet potato wedges, cilantro black bean salad, homemade soups, carrot and celery sticks, bananas, sliced strawberries, and 100 percent fruit juice.

### **Every School Lunch Includes Five Great Choices**

- ◆ MILK - fat free or low fat
- ◆ VEGETABLES - from sweet potatoes to fresh romaine salads
- ◆ FRUIT - everything from fresh cut melons to locally grown apples
- ◆ GRAINS - all items are whole-grain rich including breads, pasta, rice, and even pizza crust
- ◆ MEAT or meat alternative - including white meat chicken, reduced fat beef & bean chili, and legumes



### **School Breakfast Ensures a Nutritious Start Daily**

- ◆ Breakfast is served daily.
- ◆ District 211's breakfast is a healthy meal that provides low fat milk, whole grains, lean protein, and fruit.
- ◆ School breakfast supplies ¼ of the recommended daily allowances a student needs.
- ◆ Eating breakfast improves students' classroom performance, test scores, and grades.

This menu expansion greatly benefits students who participate in the USDA Lunch Program, which provides qualifying students meals at a free or reduced rate based on household income. All students have access to the same meals regardless of their eligibility status.

"I think it's great that PHS had the opportunity to expand the menu selection," said Debbie Madaj, Palatine High School cafeteria manager. "Students were thrilled to see that their favorite items, like pizza, were available on all lines. The biggest benefit I see is that all menu items are available to students, regardless of their eligibility status."

As more students are becoming health conscious, District 211 continues to experiment with new items, including many homemade offerings such as hummus, spinach and mushroom quesadillas, and tomato, basil, and mozzarella salad.

"I like the variety we have here and that we have a lot of choices to eat," said Danya Lloyd, a freshman who enjoys the complete meals offered at Palatine High School. "Students should have the choice to pick whether or not they want healthy food, but I do agree that schools should be making food healthier for students."

The new guidelines have raised concerns across the country regarding the financial impact for school districts. O'Connor said that while healthier foods often cost more, District 211's priority is to provide quality, affordable meals to its students. In May 2014 alone, District 211 provided 20,326 healthy breakfasts to students at a free or reduced price and 42,463 lunches to the same population. District 211 will continue to offer this beneficial service to students by adopting the federal guidelines of the NSLP and designing meals that are attractive and nutritious for students.

The benefits of participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program can be seen throughout the course of the entire school day. By participating in the program last school year, District 211 received more than \$1.5 million in government reimbursements. In fact, federal reimbursements provided \$2.59 for each reduced lunch sold and \$2.99 for every free lunch sold. Well-balanced meals offered at school help keep students focused on their studies and activities, instead of wondering where they might find their next meal. School districts that opt out of the NSLP must provide lunches to eligible students at the district's own cost. District 211 maintains its participation in the free and reduced lunch program and has met the new meal guidelines in order to provide healthy and nutritious selections of appetizing and appealing meals for all students.

"Our goal is to expose students to a larger variety of healthy options," O'Connor said. "We have even had parents tell us their children are requesting kale chips at home now after sampling them at lunch."

### Food for Thought

- ◆ High School District 211 lunch and breakfast programs have been recognized for excellence by the State Board of Education, Department of Child Nutrition, and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- ◆ Each District 211 school has a complete kitchen facility, student cafeteria, and staff dining room.
- ◆ Homemade foods are prepared in each school's kitchen – including salads, whole grain rolls, and soups.
- ◆ Lunch and breakfast menus are designed to include student favorites.
- ◆ Food Service and other school staff coordinate efforts to prepare menus, cafeteria decorations, and promotional items in conjunction with school events, such as homecoming, "Wellness Week," prom, and cultural awareness activities.
- ◆ Free and reduced-price meals are provided for students from families who meet federally established income guidelines.
- ◆ The Food Services Department cares about the environment; many disposable trays, cups, and utensils have been replaced with permanent ware in cafeterias.

*Save money, eat school lunch!*  
On average, it costs less to buy a school lunch than to bring a lunch from home.

### What's for Lunch?

Menus are posted in each school cafeteria as well as on the High School District 211 website ([adc.d211.org](http://adc.d211.org)).

*Below is a typical daily menu:*

**ENTREES**  
Yogurt Parfait  
Assorted Bistro Boxes  
Tomato & Mozzarella Salad  
Assorted Sandwiches  
All Beef Hot Dog  
Chicken Caesar Wrap  
Chicken Alfredo w/ Whole Grain Pasta  
Burrito / Taco Bar  
Cheesburger or Veggie Burger  
Popcorn Chicken & Biscuit  
Uno's Pizza

**ON THE SIDE (Choose up to four)**  
Broccoli Cuts  
Fresh Vegetable Sticks  
Tomato Basil Soup  
Fresh Salads  
Chilled or Seasonal Fresh Fruit  
100% Fruit Juice



7/2014

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O'Connor commented that student input is vital when it comes to selecting new products that meet the USDA guidelines. Students at Palatine High School agree they have a large selection of items to choose from for meals, but are curious to see what items will be offered under the Smart Snacks in Schools regulation. One of the main concerns voiced from the student body is the availability of the chocolate chip cookie next year. O'Connor assured that cookies will be offered as an à la carte item next year.

"I like the lunches right now," said Palatine High School freshman Mary Kate Healey, "and I wouldn't really want to change them, because I also like getting the cookies and other stuff. You can tell they have been making healthy changes."

The food services department recently completed an audit conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure meals meet the federal guidelines. In the April 2014 audit, District 211 received compliments on its well-run food services program, attributing the success of the program to the District's support. The report specifically praised the variety of menu choices for students, as well as the presentation of serving lines. Additionally, the audit mentioned the impressive teamwork of cafeteria staff and student acceptance of the food services program.

O'Connor said that transitioning to meet the new standards will be a challenge, but also an opportunity to expose students to healthier options. With support from administration and allowing students to be part of the process, she believes the changes will be good for the future.

"I look forward to hearing feedback from our students and focus groups," O'Connor said. "We are working with students to make the necessary changes, and that's key to the success of our program."

For more information, please visit District 211's Food Service website [here](#).