

School Meals are Changing - New USDA School Meal Requirements

You may have heard that there will be new requirements for school meals. The new requirements are great news for our students! They will help *Uniondale* build on the work we are already doing to provide more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthier main dishes in our school cafeterias.

Some of the New Requirements Include

- Increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables-more fruits and vegetable choices will be offered
- Setting calorie maximums for the first time-different calorie measurements for k-5, 6-8, and 9-12
- Limiting the amounts of whole grains offered-there is now a maximum of how many ounces of bread that can be served each day according to each grade level.
- Limiting the amount of meat/protein alternatives-the serving size for some items has decreased.

This means that some of the main dishes may not be as large as they have been in the past. Remember, though, there will be more fruits and vegetables available to fill out the meal and ensure students have plenty to eat!

Some examples of foods that may seem different:

- Juice will no longer be included with a lunch and will now only be served a la carte
- Grains-breads, pasta and rice will now be a smaller portion
- Many entrees will be smaller due to the limits of grains and proteins.
- Bigger portions of fruits and vegetables will be offered

Students will now be required to have ½ cup of fruit or vegetable on their tray for it to count as a full meal. Anything less than a full meal will be charged as individual items. We plan to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables daily to give students more options in the hopes that choosing fruits and vegetables will be easy.

In Uniondale, we have already made progress toward meeting the new USDA requirements.

What We Are Already Doing

- Fresh fruit and vegetables are served every day.
- Bread is all whole wheat /whole grain, all pasta served is whole grain.
- Main dishes have been changed to include lower sodium options.
- Dark green and orange vegetables are served on a weekly basis.
- Dried beans have been incorporated into some of the recipes.
- All Rice served is Brown Rice.

How Can You Help?

We'll face some challenges to meet the new requirements, but our school nutrition program will work hard to make these healthy changes for our students and make each meal something our students will enjoy!

The food in the cafeteria is only one piece of the puzzle of an overall healthy school environment. Health and wellness can be incorporated into classroom activities through nutrition education and short physical activity breaks. Give parents the opportunity to support healthy behaviors with suggestions for healthy class party snacks and provided with wellness information that they can utilize with their families.

The school nutrition program needs the support of school staff to succeed! You are a powerful role model for your students and this is a fabulous opportunity to model healthy choices. Whether you join your students for lunch or make time to talk with them about the food they eat at school, taking an interest in the school meal programs will demonstrate that you are aware of and supportive of the changes that the students will be seeing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We are here to help!