



New Requirements for School Lunches

For the first time in nearly two decades, the federal government has issued new nutrition standards for meals served to America's school children, based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Knowing what changes were likely to take place, Meriden Public Schools Food Services Program has already been gradually making many of these changes, familiarizing our students with and serving whole grains and a variety of legumes, fruits and vegetables.

The new requirements include: strict, age appropriate limits on serving sizes, calories, saturated fat and sodium in school meals.

All lunches include five meal components:

- a **meat or meat alternate** such as yogurt, lean beef, chicken or low-fat cheese;
- a **grain** such as whole-wheat bread or brown rice;
- a fresh or canned **fruit** selection;
- a raw or cooked **vegetable** selection; and
- a low-fat or fat-free **milk** selection

EACH CHILD MUST SELECT AT LEAST THREE FULL PORTIONS OF THESE FIVE COMPONENTS ON THEIR TRAY TO MAKE A MEAL, INCLUDING A FRUIT OR VEGETABLE. Without a vegetable or fruit, students will be charged the a la carte price instead of the meal price.

Biggest Changes:

- Based on the new United States of Agriculture (USDA) requirements, all students will now be **REQUIRED to have ½ cup fruit or vegetables on their tray at lunch** for it to count as a full meal. Anything less than a full meal will need to be charged at a la carte prices.
- As part of the National School Lunch Program, the USDA now limits us 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 a specified range for each grade group (K-5, 6-8, 9-12). This means **main entrees may not be as large as they have been previously.**

How You Can Help:

- Explain these changes to your child before they arrive at school. **Every student needs to be prepared to select at least one fruit or vegetable with their lunch every day.**
- Encourage your child to try new foods at home and at school.
- If you are concerned about how your child is spending their account funds, the account can be limited to ensure that only a breakfast or lunch can be purchased. Before you formally request this limitation be placed on your child's account, please note the following:
 - Nothing besides a breakfast or lunch will be able to be purchased on account if this block is placed on the account.
 - If a block is placed on the account, your child will not be able to purchase water, extra milk, juice, second meals, second entrees or fruit unless they are paying in cash. **It is not possible to block only some items.**
 - See our website for more information and required documentation.
 - **Please note, if a block is placed on a student account, you will no longer be able to utilize MyPaymentsPlus to make payments or view balances. Payments can be made at the registers at the cafeteria, in person or by check at 22 Liberty Street Room 2D.**

To find out more about our school nutrition programs visit our Web site at www.meridenk12.org or contact our offices at (203) 630-4166.