

Macomb CUSD #185

A quick reference guide to the Nutrition and Wellness of our students.

ARAMARK Education's Food Service Program in the Macomb School District aims to create a comprehensive approach to food service. We deliver results in several areas, including nutrition and wellness, increased participation and operational excellence. We are dedicated to supporting the District's goal of preparing children for the learning process by providing healthy and nourishing meals. This is our key commitment to help students flourish.

1. What is the National School Lunch Program?

- The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 101,000 public and non profit private schools and residential childcare institutions. In 2006, this program provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to more than 30 million children each school day. In 1998, Congress expanded the National School Lunch Program to include reimbursement for snacks served to children in after-school educational and enrichment programs to include children through the age of 18.
- The Food and Nutrition Service administers the program at the federal level. At the state level, the National School Lunch Program is administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which operates the program through agreements with school food authorities.

2. How does the National School Lunch Program work?

- Generally, public or non-profit private schools of high school grade or under and public or non-profit private residential care institutions may participate in the school lunch program. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and donated commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in after school educational or enrichment programs.

3. What are the nutritional requirements for school lunches?

- School lunches must meet the applicable recommendations for the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for Protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories.

4. How do children qualify for free and reduced-priced meals?

- Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the National School Lunch Program. Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130% and 185% percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents. (For the period July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008, 130% of the poverty level is \$26, 845 for a family of 4; 185% is \$38, 203.)
- Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price (paid) meals, but must operate their meal services as non-profit programs.



helping students flourish

Beyond Stereotypes

Facts About School Meals

The reality of school nutrition programs is too often ignored in favor of a ratings boost based on stereotypes and biased information. School lunches today follow federal nutrition guidelines and serve more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy than ever before. On a very tight budget, school nutrition professionals are preparing and serving balanced, nutritious meals in an age-appropriate portion size that provide needed nutrients and promote a healthy childhood weight.

Myth #1: School meals make children obese.

Fact: Students that eat meals served through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are more likely to be at a healthy weight. Research published in the August 2003 issue of *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* conclude that "girls in food insecure households had significantly reduced the odds of being overweight if they participated in the [National School Lunch, School Breakfast and Food Stamp Programs]." The research highlights the importance of food assistance programs to low-income children not only in addressing hunger "but also in potentially protecting them from excess weight gain." NSLP participants are more likely than non-participants to consume vegetables, milk and milk products, and meat and other protein-rich foods, both at lunch and over 24 hours; they also consume less soda and/or fruit drinks.

Myth #2: Schools serve junk food for lunch.

Fact: Meals served under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must, by federal law, meet Nutrition guidelines based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. No more than 30% of calories can come from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat. School lunches provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories. These guidelines apply over the course of one week of school lunch menus. NSLP participants have substantially lower intakes of added sugars than do non-participants.

Myth #3: Schools serve fried, greasy foods.

Fact: Schools may serve french fries, chicken nuggets or pizza at times. However, because these meals are always required to meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances, the foods still meet required nutrition standards, including limits on fat and saturated fat. We are proud to say the Macomb School District bakes nearly all its food. French fries, the only item we fry (at the Jr/Sr High only), are prepared in pure, non-hydrogenated vegetable oil. This, combined with low-fat or lean ingredients, and served with vegetables, fruit and other options is what makes each meal balanced and nutritious.

Myth #4: Sack lunches from home are better than school meals.

Fact: Research by Dr. Alice Jo Rainville of Eastern Michigan University concluded that students who eat school lunches consume less calories from fat than students who bring their lunches from home. Furthermore, the research found school lunches contain three times as many dairy products, twice as much fruit and seven times the vegetable amounts as lunches brought from home.

Myth #5: Only junk food is available through a la carte lines and vending machines.

Fact: While few federal nutrition standards exist for a la carte and vended foods and beverages, school nutrition professionals are an active part of the national trend at the state and local levels to implement nutrition standards on these items. School nutrition professionals help set nutrition policies at the local level through their state and local school board. Through federally mandated Local School Wellness Policies, school nutrition professionals are joining with parents, students and other school stakeholders to implement nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold on school campuses. Offerings for A la Carte sales are also controlled by stringent State of Illinois Standards which place effective limitations on the kind of foods that can be offered outside of the traditional meals.

Myth #6: What is served at schools is out of my control.

Fact: You can become active in setting policies at the local level! Join your local school board, write a letter and voice what you think schools should offer students. Wellness is a community effort and needs the support of the entire community. School nutrition professionals are committed to providing safe and nutritious meals to all children. Parents are encouraged to visit their child's cafeteria and talk to the Food Service Director about the nutritional profile of foods served. Parents may also request specific purchasing controls to be placed on their childrens accounts.

We are always available for your comments and concerns. For information on the National School Lunch Program and to see if you qualify, contact Christina Reneau at 309-837-2335 or by email at reneauc@mcusd185.org.

General questions, concerns or comments can be directed to Mike Legler, Food Service Director for Macomb CUSD #185. Mike can be reached at 309-837-2335 or by e-mail at leglerm@mcusd185.org.

