

# Facts About School Meal Programs

Today, kids are offered healthy, tasty and appealing choices:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- No Trans Fats
- Garden Bars
- Pizza with low-fat cheese
- Whole grain pasta
- Baked items rather than fried
- Vegetarian food items
- Healthy cooking/preparation techniques



## School Meals are Balanced and Healthy

Meals that are part of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs must meet nutrition guidelines including:

- Limiting fat and saturated fat in meals
- Providing one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C for lunch and one-quarter of the RDA for breakfast
- Meeting the dietary guidelines
- Serving age appropriate portion sizes, and provide the right balance of protein, dairy, whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

## School Meals Help Kids Maintain a Healthy Weight

- Students who eat school meals provided through the NSLP and the SBP are more likely to be at a healthy weight.\*\*
- 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.\*
- This benefit is especially relevant for kids and their parents in today's climate of heightened awareness of obesity issue.
- Students are less likely to gain weight during the school year when in school then during the summer when school is out.

## School Meals Help Students Do Better in School

- Research has shown that students who eat school meals perform their best academically.
- Students who eat school breakfast have greater gains in standardized test scores and show improvements in math, reading and vocabulary scores.\*
- Healthy eating correlates with less trips to the school nurse and less absenteeism.
- Providing nutritious school breakfast on testing days leads to improved test scores.



## School Meals are Safe

- USDA commodities used in meal programs are safe and part of a nutritious school meal.
- School nutrition professionals have rigorous training in food safety and have implemented a HACCP Plan.
- School kitchens are subject to two health inspections annually conducted by the local health department.
- According to the Food and Drug Administration, school kitchens are among the safest of commercial and institutional foodservice establishments.

## The Role of Parents

- Encourage healthy eating and lifestyles at home for you and your kids (actions speak louder than words...)
- Review the cafeteria menu with your kids to help them plan for a balanced meal
- Join your kids for school lunch or school breakfast
- Communicate any concerns or special diets your kids may have

## Wellness Policies

Our school district has guidelines for:

- School meals
- A la carte cafeteria sales
- Vending machines
- Student stores

\*Source: USDA

\*\*Source: Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, August 2003