

August 30, 2012

Dear East Moriches Parent:

Are you ready for the start of a new school year? The East Moriches School District Food Service staff is looking forward to serving your children and to some exciting menu changes. While we have always had high nutrition standards for school meals, those standards have been updated as a result of changes made to the federal school meal requirements which became effective on July 1, 2012.

The new menus are designed to ensure that students receive a balanced meal, consisting of foods from all major food groups in the right proportions to meet calorie and other nutrient needs.

While the selections we offer may sound the same because they are 'kid-favorites,' we want you to know that many of the recipes have been modified to reduce fats, salt and sugar, and to add whole grains. We will also be offering some different foods that your children may not have tried before, so please encourage your child to try these items. They just might become a new favorite!

Some of the changes that your child will notice when selecting a school meal this year include:

- More whole grains will be available. (Half of the grain items we serve this year will be whole grain.)
- Students must take at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable each day.
- Flavored milk will only be available as fat-free or skim, but unflavored or white milk may be skim or 1%.
- Fewer desserts will be offered, as the new nutrition standards focus on obtaining calories and other key nutrients from fruits, vegetables, protein foods, grains and milk.

There will be signs posted on each service line to show students how to select a reimbursable meal, as well as to help them understand how their choices fit into the key food groups needed to ensure a balanced approach to healthy eating.

We are proud to serve nutritious foods to your child and encourage you to support our ongoing efforts to improve student health and well-being by participating in our Food Service program. For more information about our menus and programs, please visit www.emoschools.org; and to learn more about healthy school meals visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov> or www.myhealthyforlife.com.

We hope that you and your child have a great year!

Thank you!



Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296)
and
FINAL RULE 7 CFR Parts 210 and 220
Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs
Fall 2012

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What does the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Act or HHFKA) mean to our clients?

A: The 72 provisions of the Act provide for improved access to nutrition assistance through program expansion, outreach, and changes that make it easier for children to get nutritious meals at school. The Act is intended to not only improve the nutrition quality of school meals, but also to improve the entire nutrition environment in schools. The Act seeks to enhance our understanding of the causes and consequences of hunger and food insecurity among children and help inform future policy decisions on effective means of program delivery that will help advance the goal of solving the problem of childhood obesity.

For additional information on the provisions of the Act, refer to http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR_2010

Q: When will the provisions of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 be implemented?

A: As of July 1, 2012, many of the key provisions of the HHFKA that directly impact the school lunch program will be in effect. These include a variety of program administration provisions designed to enhance access to nutritious meals for students in need, as well as new menu planning requirements and nutrition standards. Additional changes to the lunch program requirements, as well as several changes to the school breakfast program and other administrative changes, will go into effect starting July 1, 2013.

A summary of the planned implementation timeline for all breakfast and lunch requirements can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/nutritionstandards>

Q: Why are school meals changing?

A: The National School Lunch Act (NSLA) requires that school meals reflect the latest "Dietary Guidelines for Americans." In addition, provision 201 of the HHFKA amended the NSLA to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update menu planning and nutrition standards for school meals based on current science.

Millions of children eat school meals every day across the country, so ensuring that these meals provide healthy choices and can help teach balanced eating is an important way to impact childhood obesity and the associated health risks. We also know that more than 16 million children live in households that are experiencing food insecurity and school meals can be a significant source of nutrition for them.

Q: What are the new key elements of the menu planning requirements and nutrition standards for school meals?

A: Key elements mandated by the USDA to comply with provision 201 of the HHFKA this year include:

- A single food group based menu pattern based on fruits, vegetables, grains, meat and meat alternates, milk
- Use of 3 age/grade groups for menu planning - grades K thru 5, 6 thru 8 and 9 thru 12
- Minimum daily portion sizes and minimum weekly serving requirements for each food group must be offered
- Require students to take ½ cup fruit or vegetable with every meal
- Serve a variety of vegetables from each of these groups every week - dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy and 'all other'
- Half of the grain items offered must be 'whole grain rich' (contain at least 51% whole grain)
- The number of servings of grain items and meat/meat alternates offered must be within the weekly ranges for each age/grade group
- While a variety of milks must be offered at each meal, flavored milk can only be fat-free but unflavored milk can be fat-free or 1%
- Average Calories per meal (averaged across week) must fall within defined ranges for each age/grade group
- Average saturated fat content per meal (averaged across week) must be less than 10% of total Calories
- No added trans fat or zero trans fat as shown on the nutrition panel

Q: What other changes will we see?

A: In addition to the menu and nutrition changes outlined above, students will see new signage on every serving line to help them understand what will make up a reimbursable meal. This information will ensure that students do not inadvertently take extra items that would be charged at a la carte prices. Nutrition education is another important focus of the HHFKA, so information will be available for students to see how their food choices fit into a balanced meal.

Q: What will these changes mean to our school district?

A: This same provision of the HHFKA also provides for a 6¢ per lunch meal incentive for those districts that can document implementation of these changes. State Agencies will be assessing compliance with the new meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards by conducting on-site audits of 25% of the districts in each state this year.

