

Dear Students and Parents,

You have control over the choices you make in the cafeteria every day! The school food service staff works hard to provide appealing, nutritious foods for lunch and/or breakfast. Then you choose what to eat!

By participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, your school receives federal and state reimbursement for qualifying meals. In order for a meal to qualify, certain food components must be offered. These are meat-meat alternate, grains-breads, fruits, vegetables, and milk. For each food component there are full serving quantities required.

According to federal regulations you do not have to take all of these food components. You may choose only three or four food components in full serving quantities and the meal will still qualify for reimbursement. This is called **“Offer vs Serve.”** The school food service **offers** all five food components but can **serve** you fewer. The main reason for allowing you to decline foods that you do not intend to eat is to reduce food waste.

An example of a five (5) component lunch menu that offers all food components is:

- 1) Hamburger on a 2) Bun
  - 3) French Fries plus vegetables to equal ½ cup
  - 4) Milk
- And
- 5) Fruit to equal ½ cup

New Federal Regulations require you to take ½ cup of fruit/vegetables along with any combination to make a qualifying meal. You could take **all menu items** as above or any qualifying combination such as (as long as one combination is ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetables):

- |   |   |                                    |  |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1) Hamburger<br>Bun<br>½ cup Fr fries/Vegetable<br>Milk | 2) Hamburger<br>Bun<br>½ cup Vegetable<br>Fruit | 3) Hamburger<br>Bun<br>½ cup Fruit | 4) ½ cup Fr Fries/Veg<br>½ cup fruit<br>Milk |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|

As long as you choose a minimum of three different food components, containing minimum required quantities, your meal qualifies. The staff person who checks your tray at the end of the line is required to see that you have a qualifying meal, so you may be asked to go back and get something else if your meal is not a reimbursable one.

Choosing three, four, or five food components has no effect on the price you pay for lunch. The entire meal is the best value for your money. You can help keep the lunch line moving quickly by checking the menu ahead of time and politely telling the servers which food/s you do not want.

Remember the choice is yours! Declining foods you will not eat instead of throwing the food in the trash is a responsible way to help your school save **food, time, and money.**

Thanks for your cooperation!  
**Hot Lunch Program**