

# Important Changes to the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs



## USDA FINAL RULE

### The Rules for Reimbursable School Meals Continue to Change

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, championed by the First Lady and signed by President Obama, authorizes funding and sets policy for United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) core child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

Through this Act, **the USDA is making the first major changes in school meals in 15 years to help ensure a healthier generation of children.** These changes are intended to significantly benefit the long-term well-being and success of today's students and, in turn, will support your district's core educational mission. **However, complying with the new standards is a complex and potentially costly undertaking for many school districts.**

## Is Your District Meeting the New Regulations?

### Aramark K-12 Education Can Help.

The new nutrition standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs that began in School Year 2012–2013 meant significant changes to school meals with both cost and nutritional and menu planning implications for all schools participating in federally funded Child Nutrition Programs.

Without thoughtful menu reformulations, the impact to school food service could be drastic, resulting in higher food costs, lower student acceptance and meal program participation (which leads to fewer federal reimbursements), or a combination of these factors.

In preparation for these changes, **Aramark™ K-12 Education dietitians and culinary professionals have been working to develop menu strategies and programs that will help districts meet the new standards efficiently and cost effectively.**

- Our menus feature low- and non-fat dairy options; lean protein choices; access to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables; assorted wholegrain products; and 100 percent fruit juice and water.
- We continue to reduce added fats, sugar, and salt; eliminate added trans fats; and promote and expand the availability of breakfast.
- Our recipes are designed not only to meet the nutritional standards but also to focus on student acceptability, so students will want to participate in a healthy school food service program.



## USDA Final Rule: Food Service Program Implications

### \$ Program Costs:

Food and operational costs will potentially increase as menus are engineered to meet the nutrition standards and meal patterns.

### 🍏 Product Availability

Careful selection of vendors and products will be important to ensure compliance and meet student taste preferences.

### 👍 Student Acceptability

New nutritional requirements may pose challenges in delivering menus that meet student taste preferences; as a result, districts may see a decrease in student food service program participation and in federal program reimbursements.

### 🍴 Menu Development:

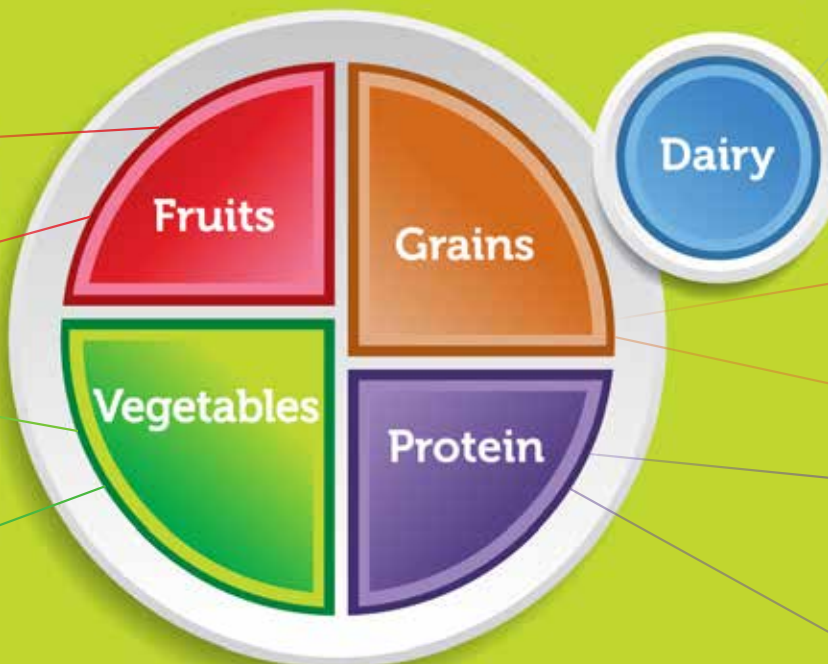
New USDA standards will require a careful and holistic approach—by incorporating dietitians, chefs, purchasing agents, food vendors, and consumer feedback—for successful menu planning.



## Meal Changes and Challenges

The final provisions of this USDA final rule on nutrition standards will take effect July 1, 2014. See below for an overview of all of the changes required for breakfast and lunch meals. Some of the changes may create significant cost, staffing, and purchasing challenges for many districts.

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### Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables will be classified as two separate groups, and there are daily and weekly minimums for each of these two groups. Districts will be required to track selections each week to ensure students are getting their correct daily and weekly quantity intakes. Students must take at least 1/2 cup of either fruit or vegetable with each reimbursable meal.

**Fruits:** Must offer at least 1 cup daily for all grades at breakfast; 1/2 cup daily at lunch for K-8; and 1 cup daily at lunch for grades 9-12.

**Vegetables:** Vegetables are now categorized into subgroups based on nutritional value. Weekly minimum amounts of each vegetable subgroup must be offered as well as daily minimums of 3/4 cup for K-8 and 1 cup for grades 9-12.

### Calories by School Segment

With childhood obesity at an all-time high in our country, the new nutrition standards set minimum and maximum calorie levels for grade groups K-5, grades 6 to 8, and grades 9 to 12. Calories are averaged over the week for each menu and grade level. Compliance to these new calorie ranges is monitored in all districts by state auditors.

### Sodium by School Segment

Schools are required to drastically cut sodium levels in school meals with levels prescribed by age/grade group. This standard poses a significant challenge not only to schools, but to manufacturers as well. In School Year 2014–2015, current sodium levels must be reduced by 11 percent, followed by another reduction of 24 percent by School Year 2017–2018. Gradually, over the next 10 years, districts will be required to meet the very aggressive goal of reducing sodium by 54 percent.

### Fats

Saturated fat is limited to less than 10 percent of total calories with no trans fats permitted.

**Milk:** Skim flavored and unflavored milks and 1% unflavored milk are the only types that may be offered in child nutrition programs.

**Grains:** All grains offered in child nutrition programs must be whole grain-rich, which means that at least half of the grain ingredient(s) must be wholegrain.

**Meat / Meat Alternatives:** There are daily minimum portion sizes and weekly minimum quantities required for each grade group at lunch. There is no requirement for meat or meat alternates at breakfast, but these can be served with a grain item.

# Final Provisions of the USDA Nutrition Standards for School Lunch and Breakfast Meals Are Effective on July 1, 2014

## Menu Plans

A single food-based menu planning approach is now required for your school's breakfast and lunch programs. The new nutrition standards and meal pattern requirements are designed to ensure that students are offered well-balanced selections that provide essential nutrients without excess calories.



## Age/Grade Classifications

To provide age-appropriate meals, age and grade group classifications are now defined by three segments of Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The new reimbursable meal standards allow some flexibility for schools with different grade configurations.

## Meal Identification

Schools are now required to identify and clearly communicate the components of a reimbursable meal at or near the beginning of service lines. The purpose is to ensure students understand what items they may select for a reimbursable meal and to discourage unintentional purchases of à la carte foods.



## Summary Highlights: Changes to the USDA Reimbursable Meal Programs

### Lunch

- Meals offered to students must have five components: Grain, Meat/Meat Alternate, Fruit, Vegetable, and Fluid Milk. Students **MUST** take at least 1/2 cup of fruit **OR** vegetable for a reimbursable meal.
- Fruits and vegetables are now considered two separate groups with increased serving sizes/day and number of servings/week of each required.
- Vegetables are now divided into subgroups with minimum daily and weekly requirements for each subgroup.
- All grains must be whole grain-rich.
- Only 1% unflavored, skim flavored, and skim unflavored milks may be offered.

### Breakfast

- Only 1% unflavored, skim flavored, and skim unflavored milks may be offered.
- All grains must be whole grain-rich.
- Beginning in School Year 2013–2014, meals offered to students must have four items from three components: Bread/Grains, Fruit, and Milk. Meat/Meat Alternates may be offered in place of some of the Bread/Grains.
- Breakfast meals offered to students must have at least four items from three components: Bread/Grains, Fruit, and Milk.
- There is no requirement for Meat/Meat Alternate at breakfast, but menus may include these in addition to the required grain items.
- In School Year 2014–2015, schools must offer 1 cup fruit at breakfast and students must select at least 1/2 cup serving for a reimbursable meal.



## Aramark K-12 Education Expertise Can Help Your District Food Service Program Ensure Healthy Students and Healthy Returns

Our focus at Aramark K-12 Education is to help you nurture your students' well-being and growth with nutritious menus; innovative, student-inspired dining environments; and wellness education programs that support student achievement. With self-sustaining food programs that increase meal participation, our K-12 experts work closely with you to cultivate healthy students as well as healthy financial returns.

Since all key elements of the nutrition standards will be in effect for School Year 2014–2015, now is an important time to closely consider the upcoming changes. **This way, your District will be fully prepared to address these new requirements with the greatest benefit for your District and your students.**



**Find out more about our K-12 food service programs and how we might help your District successfully manage through the cost and menu planning implications of the USDA Final Rule.** Please contact your Aramark Business Development Director or call 800-926-9700 for a free food service program evaluation.

**1-800-926-9700** [www.aramarkschools.com](http://www.aramarkschools.com)



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