



*Growing Together,
Learning for Life*

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Dear Diane:

The new meal pattern has many great features. First, it focuses on fruits and vegetables. School nutrition is the key in creating healthy food habits. School lunch is a great opportunity for students to expand their knowledge and learn about a variety of different fruits and vegetables, from jicama to kiwi to dried cherries. The school atmosphere often leads students to consume items they might not be exposed to or willing to try at home; positive peer pressure.

The requirements for students to select at least one full serving of fruits and/or vegetables has been a great step in creating healthy habits. Key to that success is to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables on the line daily. Following is an example of what we are serving and did serve the first week at Rockwood elementary schools: fresh local watermelon, fresh local red delicious apples, frozen blueberries, an individual box of raisins, 4 oz carton of 100% juice, small salad and fresh veggie "boat" (#100 food tray with carrots, celery, cucumber, broccoli) and the hot vegetable of the day. Previously, these items were offered on the salad bar after the point of service. We have seen a decrease in waste in the kitchen since the leftovers on the salad bar would be disposed of after being set out. Additionally, I am seeing elementary students consuming the fruits and vegetables they are selecting.

The additional requirement of offering a variety of colors of vegetables is also important and can be incorporated in the menus fairly easily, again creating healthy habits for a lifetime.

The issue of students being hungry after school, primarily high school students, has been an issue forever. As a child I was hungry after school, we are supposed to be hungry after school. It's been approximately 4 hours since we last ate. The issue is not that students are hungry; it's that those older students have not yet created the healthier habits of eating a larger portion and variety of fruits and vegetables. There are great foods like hummus that would be terrific and help to keep them feeling full, but it takes time to create new habits and to expose the students to the items.

Sincerely,

Carmen S. Fischer R.D., L.D.

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