

# 10 Things You Always Wanted to Know About Your SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM



1. Your School Nutrition Program must offer a variety of colorful vegetables each week. There are specific amounts of dark green, red/orange, and starchy vegetables that must be offered to all students. Beans are required to make a weekly appearance as well. Vegetables a plenty!
2. Your School Nutrition Program offers almost exclusively whole grain products. In almost all cases, pizza crust, French toast sticks, pancakes, waffles, breadsticks, and pasta are made with whole grains.
3. Your School Nutrition Program purchases as much locally grown fruits and vegetables as possible. For example, many districts purchase apples, lettuce, and potatoes locally when available. Many schools are also starting to grow their own vegetables.
4. Students who eat school meals have the opportunity to get at least 4 of their “5-a-day” at school. Your School Nutrition Program offers a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. In many cases, students can have unlimited quantities of fruits and vegetables.
5. When menu planning, the School Nutrition Program follows very specific guidelines. They must meet calorie, sodium, and fat standards, and offer a variety of food from all 5 food groups.
6. Your School Nutrition Program has to keep track of everything—what days each student ate lunch, what the menu was, how much food was purchased, how it was served, what the temperature of the meal was, how each student’s lunch got paid for—and be able to provide it up to 3 years later.
7. Your School Nutrition Program operates under strict federal and state guidelines. Cafeterias have a state review every 3 years to ensure their program’s meals meet nutrition standards and have annual health inspections.

8. Your School Nutrition Program has to be self-supported. They have their own budget, separate from the school. From this budget, they have to pay salaries, benefits, buy food, purchase and repair equipment, as well as buy paper and other non-food supplies.
9. Research conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that the nutritional quality of school meals has been increasing steadily since 2006-2007.
10. Students receiving free and reduced lunch are kept confidential and are not identified in the lunch line. Students can apply for free and reduced meals any time during the year. Applying for free/reduced lunch actually benefits the school district as a whole by increasing funding from many sources in different departments. Many sources of funds require that a particular participation percentage level be met.