

# FOOD

How it works  
and why it matters

# IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

Developed by



## What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program, or NSLP, is a federally-assisted meal program operating in public and non-profit private schools that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

## What is the history of the NSLP?



The National School Lunch Act, which led to the NSLP, was signed into law in 1946 by President Truman in response to the military's discovery that at least 40% of rejected World War II recruits were turned away on the basis of poor nutrition. The Act also supported U.S. agriculture by finding a use for surplus crops.

## What is the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act?



The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 is a federal law that authorizes all childhood nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program. The Act instituted new USDA guidelines for the NSLP that require more fresh fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, calorie maximums by age group, sodium reductions, and healthier snacks in schools.

## School Meal Participation and Cost for the 2012-2013 School Year

**30.7 Million**

CHILDREN ATE SCHOOL LUNCH EACH DAY.



**21.5 Million**

CHILDREN QUALIFIED FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICED LUNCH.



**5 Billion**

SCHOOL LUNCHES WERE SERVED IN TOTAL.

**12.2 Billion**

COST OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM INCLUDING COMMODITIES.

## Federal Reimbursement Rates for the 2014-2015 School Year

For schools that served **less than 60%** free/reduced-price lunches:

Free

\$3.04\*

Paid

\$0.34\*

For schools that served **more than 60%** free/reduced-price lunches:

\$3.06\*

\$0.36\*

\*Rates reflect an extra \$.06 per meal that districts receive upon USDA certification of their menu cycles.

## How Schools Spend the Money

### The High-Low Range

With personnel, equipment, training, etc. as part of the equation, the average spent on actual food is \$1.25 per day.

Food **\$1.40**

Labor & Overhead **\$1.60**

Food **\$0.85**

Labor & Overhead **\$2.15**

## What are the New USDA Guidelines for school lunch?

- ¾ to 1 cup of vegetables offered per day\*
- ½ to 1 cup of fruits offered per day\*
- Weekly requirements for all vegetable subgroups (i.e., dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy, and other)
- Juice limited to no more than half of the fruit and vegetable offerings (100% juice - no sugar added)
- Added sugars limited in canned and frozen fruits
- All grains must be whole-grain rich
- Allows tofu to count as a meat alternate
- Only allows fat-free (flavored or unflavored) or unflavored low-fat (1 percent) milk
- Total calories that can be offered in a meal are limited: must be within minimum and maximum range
- Less than 10% of calories can come from saturated fat
- Product must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving
- Gradual but major sodium reductions through 2020

\*The amount offered varies by age/grade group. It is only required to take a half cup of fruit or vegetable.

## The Five Components of a Complete School Lunch



Milk



Vegetable



Whole Grains



Fruit



Meat or Meat Alternate

NOTE: In order for a meal to be fully reimbursable by the federal government, a student must take 3 of the 5 components (including at least 1 fruit or vegetable).

## Benefits of Scratch Cooking in Schools



- Whole, nutrient-rich foods
- Instills healthy eating habits
- Healthy bodies, healthy minds
- Reduced packaging/waste
- Local procurement
- Learning opportunities

## EXTRA CREDIT: Farm to School

### HOW DOES FARM TO SCHOOL WORK?



1. **Procurement:** Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in school cafeterias
2. **Education:** Students participate in activities related to agriculture, food, health, and nutrition
3. **School gardens:** Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening

★ According to the USDA, 38,629 schools serving over 21 million students are buying local produce and teaching students where their food comes from. Learn more at [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)