



Office of P-12 Education

Charles A. Szuberla, Jr., Assistant Commissioner
Office of School Operations
Room 874 EBA

(518) 474-2238

August 27, 2012

Dear Superintendents, Principals and Executive Directors of Non-Public Schools:

This letter is to make you aware of numerous changes impacting your school food programs. Beginning July 1, 2012 federal regulations require schools to offer a wider variety of nutritious foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables and to meet stricter limits on saturated fat and portion sizes. The new meal pattern mandates are part of a strategy to create a healthier school environment which will promote a healthy lifestyle that will help children succeed in the classroom.

The changes you will see this year are the result of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This is a complex and prescriptive rule which requires schools to assure Congress and the public that the nutritional quality of school meals has improved sufficiently to warrant the allocation of additional funds. Compliance with the new meal pattern is not optional. Additional regulatory changes will be phased in over the next few years.

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to submit their menus and supporting documentation to the State Education Department (SED) for approval in order to receive an additional \$.06 per lunch meal effective October 1, 2012. Subsequently, SED must conduct validation reviews of 25 percent of the LEAs certified in 2012-2013 to ensure the meals served are in compliance. As part of the process, food service directors/managers are working with neighboring LEAs, nutritionists, dieticians, as well as federal and state agencies to create healthy and appetizing meals that will appeal to students.

Examples of changes you will see include:

- Portion sizes individualized for grades (e.g. K-5, 6-8, 9-12)
These portion limitations are aligned with the established minimum and maximum caloric levels per lunch which must be attained daily.
- Only fat free or low fat milk available
- Flavored milk must be fat free
- Larger servings and more variety of fruits and vegetables including the requirement to offer the following subgroups of vegetables weekly: dark green, red-orange, legumes and other vegetables
- Limited saturated fat

- Half the grains must be whole grain rich
- No artificial trans fats
- Students must take ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable with every lunch in order for the meal to be claimed for reimbursement

Parents, teachers and students will need to be made aware of the changes children will encounter in the cafeteria. We will place examples of prototype letters you can customize for your community on the Child Nutrition web site at www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm.

Thank you for your cooperation in implementing the new healthier meal patterns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles A. Szuberla, Jr." in a cursive script. The signature is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Charles A. Szuberla, Jr.