



## Frequently Asked Questions – Nutrition Resolution

### 1. How many meals does Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) serve?

Milwaukee Public Schools serves meals year round. All schools with academic activities, both during the school year and in summer provide breakfast and lunch to its students. In addition, many schools also provide either snacks or dinners. During the school year, some schools also participate in the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable program which provides an additional fruit or vegetable twice a week. During the 2016-17 school MPS served and received reimbursement for 17.5 million meals as follows, including summer school:

- Breakfast = 6.6 million
- Lunch = 9.8 million
- Snacks = .5 million
- Dinners = .6 million

### 2. What constitutes a Reimbursable Meal at Lunch?

A reimbursable meal at lunch requires that a student select a minimum of three of five meal components (Meat/Meat alternate, Grain, Fruit, Vegetable and Milk); one of the three components must be a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable.

### 3. What constitutes a Reimbursable Meal at Breakfast?

A reimbursable meal at breakfast requires that a student select a minimum of three of four meal items (Two Grains, Fruit/Fruit Juice or



Vegetable/Vegetable Juice and Milk); one of the three items must be a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable.

4. How long do students have to eat breakfast and lunch?

Each school administrator governs meal times and length of meal service based on their scheduled curriculum. School Nutrition responds to the needs of the individual school. Administrative Procedure 4.07 Student Nutrition and Wellness states, under section 3(e) Improving Student Nutrition: “School schedules are set to provide students with a minimum of 10 minutes to eat breakfast, and 20 minutes to eat lunch, from the time the student is seated.” MPS School Nutrition Services supports this practice.

5. Does MPS offer breakfast at every school?

Yes. All MPS schools serve breakfast. To ensure all students have easy access to breakfast, multiple options are available; which may include grab and go, breakfast in the classroom, as well as breakfast in the cafeteria.

6. What determines if a school provides a hot or cold breakfast?

A school either offers breakfast in the classroom (BIC), Traditional breakfast in the cafeteria, or a combination. Storage space, school building designs, and staffing all determine if a school offers hot or cold breakfast in the classroom. Traditional breakfast schools currently offer hot breakfast 2-3 times per week.

7. Can breakfasts be more protein-rich?

School Nutrition is currently planning to replace a whole grain breakfast cracker with a protein item a minimum of once per week for Breakfast in



the Classroom (BIC). A protein item is already part of the Traditional breakfast program 2-4 days per week in the cafeteria.

8. Sometimes when my child's bus is late, they do not have enough time to eat breakfast. How can this situation be remedied?

Each school has a procedure in place to feed breakfast to children that arrive on late buses. Please check with your school principal.

9. I feel that my child's breakfast meals contain too much sugar and too many carbs. How can this be addressed?

Carbohydrates are the most readily available source of energy, and a great option for children especially in the morning. A limited quantity of sugar in the blood stream is necessary to stimulate brain function and enhance concentration. That is precisely why our choice of breakfast cereal contains whole-grains and reduced sugar.

10. How are changes in the menu determined?

Menus are always subject to change. Things that affect menu changes include: product availability, quality of food, individual school circumstances, and factors beyond our control, i.e. global weather conditions that may affect produce.

11. How do menu changes impact students who may have a health condition that requires close monitoring of food intake?

If a menu change does occur, the Food Service Manager informs the School Nurse or Secretary of the change. School staff are responsible for monitoring the restricted food item for the students at the *Point of Service* (computer) via an alert notice that pops up any time the student has a



Special Dietary Needs form on file. In this case, the Food Service Manager will be ready with an alternate food item.

12. How are students with allergies accommodated through the MPS breakfast and lunch program?

School nutrition accommodates all students that have a completed Special Dietary Needs form on file by substituting food items for any documented food allergies, food intolerances and/or religious restrictions. Texture modification is also accommodated, but this requires a Physician's signature.

13. I am a school nurse and it is difficult to count carbs when the menu changes. What can be done to make this an easier process?

Any time there is a menu change the Food Service Manager should inform their School Nutrition Supervisor and School Nurse in advance. In doing so, the carb count can be calculated before the start of the meal service period. If this is not occurring at your school, please contact School Nutrition 475-8370 and ask to speak to a Supervisor. A supervisor will follow up with your schools Food Service Manager.

14. What is Offer vs. Serve?

All MPS Schools participates in Offer vs. Serve. Offer vs. Serve allows students to select three of five meal components; one of the three components must be a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable. This option gives the student the ability to make their own food choices, which leads to a satisfied dining experience and less food waste.



15. How does Offer vs. Serve apply to a student that receives PrePack Lunch?

Even PrePack Lunches allow for Offer vs. Serve, as student receive a Hot Pack (Entrée & Veggie), a Cold Pack (Fruit & Grain) and a Choice of Milk. The child can select all of it, or part of it, so long as it meets the reimbursable meal requirements.

16. How can we work together to minimize waste in the cafeteria?

School Nutrition staff can encourage students to taste new foods, we call it the “two-bite club.” Teachers can role-model healthy eating in school. Parents can expose children to a wide variety of foods at home and while grocery shopping. Offer vs. Serve (O vs. S) gives the student the ability to make their own food choices, so long as they select 3 food components including ½ cup of fruit or vegetable. O vs. S. leads to a more satisfying dining experience and less food waste.

17. Where does the food come from?

School Nutrition Services works with a Prime Vendor, U.S. Foods. Like local grocery stores, food comes from a variety of suppliers/manufacturers throughout the nation. Whenever possible food is purchased within a 200-250 mile radius of the district, such as bread (Alpha Bakery) and dairy (Prairie Farms). Local purchases also include produce, like apples and broccoli when they are in season.

18. Who prepares the meals?

A Food Service Manager, and/or Food Service Assistant-in-charge, and a staff of Food Service Assistants prepare and serve meals daily.



19. How is the temperature of food monitored?

Temperatures are taken routinely throughout the day: before, during, and after food is cooked. Refrigerator, Milk Cooler and Freezer temps are also taken twice a day.

20. My child has shared that the meat is not always cooked through. What procedures are in place to make certain food is completely cooked?

All meat items are pre-cooked and flash frozen for food safety purposes. No meats are cooked from a raw state. All meats are thawed and heated on site.

21. Can food be made more recognizable to students?

Part of the mission of School Nutrition Services is to expose children to a wide variety of food items. We serve a diverse student population. Therefore, the lunch menu incorporates American, Italian, Mexican and Asian cuisine. Children may need to experience a new food a dozen times before they decide to taste it.

22. What steps are being taken to make foods more familiar and appealing to students?

School Nutrition conducts taste tests to obtain student input on new products. School Nutrition will promote new menu items in advance so students can learn more about the new food items they will be eating. We also post menus and/or photos of the food items being served at lunch.

23. My child shares that the food is not tasty and is not appetizing.

The food that MPS prepares is mildly spiced. Condiments are offered based



on the menu of the day. At the high school level *Seasoning Stations* are provided for students to flavor their food based on their individual palate.

24. Are you taking steps to provide more fresh, as opposed to frozen food?

MPS currently offers fresh fruits and/or fresh vegetables on the lunch menu 90% of the time throughout the month. Fresh Fruit Bowls have been integrated on the Traditional Breakfast menu three days per week (M-W-F). A long-range goal is to implement fresh fruit for Breakfast in the classroom sites as well.

25. My child's school is part of the fresh fruits and vegetable program and often the vegetables being served to the students have never been seen or tasted before. Why?

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program is designed to introduce children to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, and to promote a lifetime of healthy eating through exposure and education.

26. Is there a way to include choice for students through things like a salad bar?

We currently provide a variety of fresh salads made daily, at the high school level, as well as Wraps, and Sub sandwiches. To implement salad bars throughout the district we will need to fill current vacancies, add additional staff, and add equipment.

27. Can you expand the types of fruit offered such as including mangoes?

Mangoes have been on the menu.



28. Can we create and utilize more community gardens?

Yes. We are always looking for opportunities to expand school gardens.

This process involves the school principal, a garden lead, Facilities and Maintenance, and School Nutrition. If an opportunity for a school garden presents itself, speak with the school principal and have them reach out to the following contacts: John Linn, Manager of Design and Construction, [linnja@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:linnja@milwaukee.k12.wi.us), and/or Jessica Das, Dietitian Associate, [dasjl@milwaukee.12.wi.us](mailto:dasjl@milwaukee.12.wi.us) .

29. Are metrics used to determine what lunches students like best?

Meal counts and attendance reports are reviewed to see what meals are most popular with students. School Nutrition also received daily feedback directly from students and Food Service Managers based on meal consumption.

30. How come the younger children (K-5) receive the same portions as the middle school students (6-8)?

USDA allows the School Food Authority (SFA) to select the most appropriate meal pattern to meet the district's needs. MPS has many schools with combination grades (K-5, K-8, K-12). Therefore, School Nutrition Services has opted to utilize one "overlapping" K-8 meal pattern, for all elementary students. Older students can always purchase additional food items from the ala carte menu, as long as they have money on their meal accounts.



31. Many non-MPS schools offer ala-carte items in their cafeterias which students pay for themselves. Is this an option for MPS?

Yes, ala carte items are always available in the cafeteria for purchase as long as the student has money on their meal accounts.

32. What entities regulate MPS School Nutrition Programs?

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Wisconsin DPI, City of Milwaukee Health Department.

33. How are MPS meals funded?

Each year the USDA establishes a meal reimbursement rate that is used to reimburse schools for eligible meals served. This includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinners as well as summer school. Each month MPS submits claims to DPI indicating the number of meals served. Typically within a few weeks, MPS receives reimbursement through DPI for the meals served to students. In the 2013-14 school year MPS began participating in Community Eligible Provision (CEP). CEP is a meal service options for schools and school districts in low income areas. This program allows MPS to serve breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Under CEP all students' breakfast and lunches are reimbursed through the Department of Agriculture. Since MPS has participated in CEP it is now able to fully fund its operations without support from the general fund.

34. Will parents have input going forward?

Yes, there is a designated School Nutrition e-mail that parents can use at any time to provide input: [schoolnutrition@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:schoolnutrition@milwaukee.k12.wi.us).