

August 28, 2012

Dear Chief Administrator,

As you are aware, healthy students (emotionally and physically) are better prepared to learn, are more attentive in class, miss fewer days of school, and tend to perform better academically. The 2012-13 school year will provide an opportunity for schools to further demonstrate their commitment to promoting student health by improving the School Nutrition Program.

Effective July 1, 2012, federal requirements went into place establishing new nutrition standards for school meals, specifically the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The new nutrition standards are based on a collection of scientific research and are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The new nutrition standards require the offering of more whole grains and a greater variety of fruits and vegetables to school meals. In order to stay within minimum and maximum ranges for grains, meats and calories, portion sizes may be reduced from what was previously offered. Keeping in mind that these requirements were established using scientific data for the general population, the general breakfast or lunch meal may not provide a sufficient amount of calories for the highly active students. As in the past, these students may find it necessary to purchase additional food to supplement their meal. However, with increased offerings and varieties of fruits and vegetables, most students will be able to obtain the appropriate quantity of food needed for a student their age.

When promoted positively, the new nutrition standards can be a welcomed change to the school day. Schools across the nation, but more specifically throughout the Commonwealth, have been transitioning to whole grains, and more fruits and vegetables over the last several years, and have done so with great buy-in and feedback from students and parents.

Adults in the school community, such as administrators, teachers and support staff, have the ability to continue this momentum and influence the success of parent and student acceptance of the new nutrition standards by being informed and embracing the changes as another opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to overall positive student outcomes.

Some of the great work that is occurring across the Commonwealth to promote student health has been captured in the high energy video, Ready, Set, Grow! Healthy Choices for Bodies and Minds.. We encourage you to take a few minutes to share the video (below) with your school professionals.

As additional changes are phased in over the coming years, we look forward to your continued support and collaboration in nourishing students to provide a healthy foundation for their learning process.

Sincerely,



Vonda Cooke, M.S., R.D. Director
Child Nutrition Programs

Full video - running time 19:17

www.pacast.com/players/cmsplayer.asp?video_filename=8470_NutritionFinalWithCredits2.m4v.

Video preview - running time 2:26

http://www.pacast.com/players/cmsplayer.asp?video_filename=ReadySetGrowPromo.m4v