

A woman with dark, curly hair and a grey and white plaid scarf is speaking at a community meeting. She is holding several sheets of paper in her left hand and gesturing with her right hand. In the background, other people are seated, and there are colorful posters on the wall.

Parent Checklist

What You Can Do to

Improve Your School's Food

Created in Partnership with Chicago Public Schools + Healthy Schools Campaign

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School food has

changed in recent years—

for the better.

But we need to make sure these healthy changes are being implemented in your school. Why? Nutritious food is critical to student success in school and in life, and many Chicago Public School students receive 80 percent of their meals during the school day.

Introduction

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) have been working together for the past decade to transform the district's school meal program. CPS and HSC know that students who eat healthier at school and at home have better attention spans, better class participation and higher test scores. This is why CPS, HSC and other partners have been working together to ensure that positive change for school food in Chicago is meaningful, sustainable and in the best interest of the students whose health and learning it directly affects.

Parent voices are key to this work. Through HSC's Parents United for Healthy Schools program, parents develop the knowledge and skills to help bring about health-promoting changes at their children's schools and reinforce healthy eating habits at home. Since 2006, Parents United has been at the forefront of helping make Chicago schools healthier places for their children. Parent leaders were instrumental in championing the Breakfast in the Classroom program at individual schools and at the district level. Parents have also tirelessly advocated for healthier school menus and supported schools' successful efforts to achieve the USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge, which later inspired the Healthy CPS School Indicator.

In 2013, CPS and HSC piloted and launched a series of School Food 101 workshops to raise awareness of the new changes to the school meal program, increase understanding of school meal basics and hear about how those changes are being implemented at the school level. We asked elementary school parents to survey their kids about the school meals they were

receiving. From this learning process, CPS and HSC launched a comprehensive school meal survey for parents in the fall of 2014. The results from this survey made it clear that parents and school administrators needed more resources and information and ways to share their feedback. It's with that need in mind that CPS and HSC partnered to create new resources around school food. You can access all of these resources online at healthyschoolscampaign.org/school-food-resources.

CPS has made great progress in ensuring students receive healthy food as part of their school experience. Food served in CPS now meets, and—in some cases—exceeds, the standards set out by the USDA. We need to make sure this great progress is reflected in the meal programs of all CPS schools. That's where you come in.

This checklist includes items that CPS is committed to implementing as well as ideas and strategies to help create a school environment that is supportive of the school meal program and students' efforts to eat healthy.

Instructions: Please complete this checklist and share with your school wellness team. This checklist can help you think about ways your school can better support the success of the school meal program and share feedback with CPS Nutrition Support Services.

Look at the categories on the next page, and select the category you would like to focus on at your school and follow the directions.

I'm concerned about:

Food served in the cafeteria

CPS offers breakfast, lunch, after school snack, after school supper and Saturday meals to all students during the school year. And during the summer months, CPS also serves breakfast and lunch to students. In 2010, CPS adopted new nutrition standards that require school meals to include more fruits and veggies; more whole grains; fewer potatoes and nachos; and no more doughnuts and breakfast pastries. CPS meals are meeting national standards and exceed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Gold Standard of the HealthierUS School Challenge Guidelines. Is this happening in your school? Fill out the **School Food Checklist**, located on the next page, to see how well your school is doing.

Food sold in vending machines

The Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy establishes nutrition standards for food sold to students outside the school lunch program, including vending machines. Elementary schools can only sell water or 100 percent juice beverages in vending machines and nothing else. High schools must meet certain nutritional requirements for food in vending machines. What's in your school's vending machine? Learn more and follow the requirements and tips described in the CPS DineWell toolkit: [**bit.ly/Dine-WELL**](http://bit.ly/Dine-WELL).

Food used in celebrations and school fundraisers

CPS schools are expected to adhere to the district's Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy, which encourages celebrations to focus on fun rather than food and limits schools to two unhealthy celebrations per year.

All foods sold as part of school fundraisers must meet the policy's nutrition guidelines and cannot take place during school meals. Does your school focus on fun rather than food for celebrations? Are school fundraisers promoting healthy food choices and lifestyles? Learn more and follow the requirements and tips described in the CPS FundraiseWell toolkit: [**bit.ly/fundraiseWELL**](http://bit.ly/fundraiseWELL).

Food sold in the school store

The Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy establishes nutritional standards for food available to students outside the school lunch program, including school stores. School store cannot be open during school meal times. Did you know that food sold to students on school grounds, outside the meal program, should not exceed 150 calories for elementary and 200 calories for high school students? Foods also must meet specific fat, sodium, and sugar requirements. Is your school meeting the requirements? Learn more and follow the requirements and tips described in the CPS DineWell toolkit: [**bit.ly/Dine-WELL**](http://bit.ly/Dine-WELL).

School Meal Basics

- School meals meet the HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Standard. In 2010, new CPS nutrition standards were adopted that meet and exceed the HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Standard. This means that school meals now include more fruits and veggies; more whole grains; fewer potatoes and nachos; and no more doughnuts and breakfast pastries. To learn more about meal nutrition standards, cost and logistics of the CPS meal program, see the report, *10 Pathways to Excellence in School Meals*, located at bit.ly/CPS-Pathways-report.
- In 2011, CPS adopted universal Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC), an initiative that offers all elementary students, regardless of their families' income, a free breakfast when they arrive at school. This program is a proven strategy to increase breakfast participation, which helps students focus and do better in class. Although BIC must be implemented in every elementary school, it is not a one-size-fits all solution. There are several options for serving breakfast to all students, and principals can work with CPS to create a customized approach that works for their school's specific challenges and constraints.
- The school participates in Farm to School. CPS has made a commitment to offer students more foods that are grown within 250 miles of Chicago. CPS indicates which items are local by placing an "L" next to the menu item. Each monthly menu features: a local frozen item once a week, fresh items twice a month and chicken raised without antibiotics twice a month. More information about this program and the monthly local foods menu are posted on cpsfarmtoschoolmarket.com.
- The school has achieved the Healthy CPS School Certification and/or LearnWell Certification. LearnWELL is one of the four badges required for a school to become Healthy CPS. Schools that are certified LearnWELL are considered to be 100% compliant with the district wellness policies regarding healthy food (including snacks and beverages) and physical activity. Learn more by visiting bit.ly/LearnWELL.

Menus

CPS aims to offer nutritious, appealing foods and meals that contribute to the overall good health, growth and academic performance of our students. This section details fruit, vegetable and beverage requirements of the school meal program as well as other items that go above the set standards. Take a look!

Fruits

As part of each school meal, CPS requires and is committed to:

For breakfast

- The meal offers a different fruit daily and at least two fresh fruits per week (daily where there is a choice of fruit). 100% juice may be counted as a fruit only once a week.
- Vegetables from the dark-green, red/orange, beans and peas and other sub-groups may be substituted for fruits to meet the breakfast fruit requirement.

For lunch

- Five different fruits per week of which three must be fresh fruits. CPS does not serve fruit juice at lunch.
- Daily fruit options are available in at least two different locations on each service line.

For all school meals

- Fruit options are not browning, bruised or otherwise damaged.
- Whole fruit options are displayed in attractive bowls or baskets (instead of chaffing/hotel pans).
- Daily fruit options are easily seen by students of average height for your school.
- Daily fruit options are bundled into all grab-and-go meals available to students.

Here are a few items that can promote student fruit consumption:

- Sliced or cut fruit is available daily.
- Daily fruit options are given creative, age appropriate names.
- Daily fruit options are written legibly on menu boards in all service and dining areas.
- Fruit is available at all points of sale in the cafeteria.
- A mixed variety of whole fruits are displayed together.

Vegetables

As part of each school meal, CPS requires and is committed to:

For breakfast

- No vegetable requirement, but vegetables from the dark-green, red/orange, beans and peas and other sub-groups may be substituted for fruits to meet the breakfast fruit requirement.

For lunch

- At least two types of vegetable are available daily.
- Offers one meatless entrée each day and a variety of protein each week.
- Limits starchy vegetables to 1 cup a week.
- Limits oven baked potato (i.e. french fries, tater tots, hash browns, etc.) items to once a week in elementary schools and twice a week in high schools.
- Limits nachos to once a week in high schools and once a month at elementary schools.
- At least one vegetable option is available in all food service areas.
- All vegetable names are printed/written on name-cards and displayed next to each vegetable option daily.
- Daily vegetable options are easily seen by students of average height for your school.

For all school meals

- Vegetables are not wilted, browning or otherwise damaged.
- All vegetable names are written and legible on menu boards.

Here are a few items that can promote student vegetable consumption:

- Individual salads are available to all students.
- Daily vegetable options are available in at least two different locations on each service line.
- A daily vegetable option is bundled into grab-and-go meals available to students.
- Available vegetable options have been given creative or descriptive names.
- All vegetable names are included on the published monthly school lunch menu.



Healthy Schools Campaign is the leading voice for people who care about our children, education, and our environment. We teach and empower people to advocate for children to have fresh air, healthy food and physical activity to shape their lifelong learning and health. As an independent, not-for-profit organization, we help facilitate collaboration between parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers. Our goal is to help prepare this diverse group of stakeholders to lead change at the school, district, state and national levels.

healthyschoolscampaign.org