

***Talking points, if you welcome or intend to adopt the changes:***

1. As always, ***our primary job in (Name of your department) is to make sure that our students are well-fed, so they can learn well in school and live healthy lives.***
2. To help us do that job, several years ago the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, which oversees the School Meals programs across the country, put in place the most sweeping changes to our regulations in the 70-plus year history of the program. Saturated fat and sodium were decreased; whole grains, fruits, and vegetables were increased; calorie maximums per average meal were established; and many, many other changes, large and small, were put in place. ***In our district, we'd already been doing many of these things for years,*** but for the first time the USDA regulations codified what qualifies as good nutrition for our kids.
3. This month (December 2018) USDA announced several adjustments to the regulations: ***the whole grain requirement has been relaxed, sodium targets have been pushed back, and what had been a temporary adjustment to allow 1% lowfat flavored milk has been made permanent.***
4. These minor changes are aimed at providing local child nutrition operations like ours the ***flexibility to prepare and serve our meals so that our kids will receive good nutrition and eat the meals we provide.***
5. I also want to emphasize that ***the requirement to include at least one fruit or vegetable serving is still in place, as are the calorie maximums.***
6. We still are strongly committed to providing nutritious, healthy meals to our students, and we welcome adjustments like these that make it more likely that kids will participate in our programs and eat what we serve them. ***Again, our sole job is to feed students well so they can learn well.***

7. Regarding the three changes specifically: We'll still be ***providing whole-grain rich options in at least half the grains we serve each week.***
8. We'll still be ***expecting our processed-food providers to meet the sodium targets as they take effect,*** even if that will take a little longer and not go quite as low as first planned. ***Our local cooking is already within the sodium targets.***
9. And we believe that ***1% flavored milk is not substantially less healthy than nonfat flavored milk*** – indeed, a small amount of fat is actually good for kids and the key objective is to make sure they drink the milk so they get the protein and calcium.
10. The bottom line is that these relatively minor changes will help us serve a healthy, balanced meal that kids will eat. This is exactly the kind of flexibility that makes sense, and we're very happy that USDA is paying attention to how the school meals regulations work in practice and is adjusting them as necessary. ***These new regulations were put in place to make sure kids eat well and learn well, and we welcome any fine-tuning, like this, that serves that purpose.***