INDIANA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) at Lunch
Notification Letter for Households

Our school nutrition department participates in the National School Lunch Program and implements Offer versus Serve. Offer versus Serve allows students to decline some of the food offered as part of a complete meal. The goals of Offer versus Serve are to reduce food waste in the school nutrition programs and to allow students more customization of the meal they select. For general OVS guidelines, please read the Understanding the Lunch Line section below.

Understanding the Lunch Line

All schools are required by USDA guidelines to have adequate signage posted in the cafeteria and on the serving line to help explain how students can create a complete meal. The friendly staff at your child's school are happy to help as well.

At lunch, all students have the opportunity to choose from menu items that fall within five important food groups, including **milk**, **protein**, **fruits**, **vegetables**, and **grains**. While the most nutritious lunch contains all of the offered items, we understand that sometimes our students do not like some of the items we serve. To make our customers happy, we like to give them the option to decline items they do not want to eat.

Out of the five food groups your student is offered, they must choose at least three food groups to make a complete meal. One of the selections must be at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable. Students who do not create a complete meal will be charged a la carte pricing for the items selected.

Example Menu for Lunch*

Chicken Soft Taco
1/2 cup **Black Beans**
1/2 cup **Fiesta Corn**
1/2 cup **Strawberries**
1/2 cup **Diced Peaches**
8oz of **Milk**

With Offer Versus Serve at lunch, your student could choose:

- Chicken Soft Taco and Fiesta Corn (**Protein** + **Grain** + **Vegetable** = 3 food groups)
- Chicken Soft Taco, Strawberries, and Milk (**Protein** + **Grain** + **Fruit** + **Milk** = 4 food groups)
- Black Beans, Fiesta Corn, Strawberries, Milk (**Vegetable** + **Vegetable** + **Fruit** + **Milk** = 3 food groups)

Even though the school participates in Offer versus Serve, students are not required to decline items. In fact, they're encouraged to take all five food groups, but the choice is up to them! If your student comes home and says they did not get enough to eat at lunch, ask if they are taking all of the food group offerings. Don't hesitate to reach out to Mary Barris – School Nutrition Director if you have any questions about the offered menu.

*Keep in mind that some cafeterias offer multiple options within each food group. Sitting down with young children to review the menu ahead of time will help ensure they are prepared as they come to the cafeteria for lunch.

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