

Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) Best Practices Come to Life in Minnesota Schools

VEGETABLES

New vegetable requirements are part of the HHFKA

As part of the HHFKA regulations, beginning July 1, 2012, the vegetable group (or component) will now stand alone as its own group, separate from the fruits. Schools are required to include at least one vegetable each day on menus. In addition to the **daily** requirement, the five subgroup **weekly** requirements must also be met (see below).

For grades 9-12, the menu include at least **1 cup of vegetables** each day. This vegetable can come from any subgroup. Over the course of a week, schools must plan to serve vegetables that represent each of the five sub-groups. The Minnesota Department of Education's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recommends that schools serve at least two vegetable choices per day. Remember, there are different portion sizes and requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8.

Right: An attractive salad bar at the Grand Rapids school district.



Veggie Subgroups

Dark Green

Broccoli
Dark green leafy lettuce
Romaine lettuce
Spinach



Kale

Red/Orange

Acorn and Hubbard squash
Butternut squash
Carrots
Pumpkin
Red peppers
Sweet potatoes
Tomatoes

Bean/Peas (Legumes)

Black, Pinto, Navy, Kidney
Garbanzo and soy beans
Black-eyed peas
Chickpeas
Lentils
Split peas

Starchy

Corn
Green peas
White potatoes
Water chestnuts

Other

Bean sprouts
Beets
Cabbage
Cauliflower
Celery
Cucumbers
Green beans
Green peppers
Iceberg lettuce
Jicama
Mushrooms
Summer squash





Encourage students to select fruits and vegetables. Make fruits and veggies the “easy choice!”

Getting students to eat healthy food items sometimes lies in the details. If you don't have room for a fruit and veggie bar that would bring attention to fruits and vegetables, do what Withrow Elementary School (Stillwater ISD) did. The nutrition staff placed inexpensive black bowls filled with colorful fruits and vegetables right on their serving line! Bowls are replenished on a frequent basis.

Offer vs. Serve

Starting with the upcoming school year, students **MUST** take a 1/2 cup fruit or vegetable at lunch in order for the meal to be reimbursable. Make selecting a fruit or vegetable easy for students. That's why strategically placing colorful, appetizing fruits and vegetables at the *front* of the serving line is so important! The monitor at the point of service will thank you for not having to spin the students around to go back and select a fruit or vegetable. Some schools are already planning on having a bowl of fresh fruit, 1/4 cup of dried commodity fruit mix, or an easy to serve snack bag of baby carrots or other fresh veggies at the end of the line *just in case!*

Farm to School

Farm to School is a nationwide collaborative effort to connect school districts with local farmers for the purpose of serving healthy school meals while utilizing local fresh foods.

Bringing more locally sourced, fresh fruits and vegetables into school cafeterias is a seminal activity of many farm to school efforts; procuring locally sourced, minimally processed main meal items so that the entire school meal is representative of regional options is also a focus of many Farm to School programs.



In addition to procurement activities, schools around Minnesota are growing produce for use in the school cafeteria through school gardens – both outside in the field and via the “hoop house” concept. Could there be a better way to encourage consumption of these healthy foods than by growing them yourself?

Left: Just-picked carrots, green and purple string beans from the Bemidji School District.

Teach the Kids!

It's going to be important that students are aware of the new HHFKA changes. Get the word about the new vegetable subgroups and the requirement to select $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable each day. Include information on menus, school newsletters and websites, or talk about the changes during an all-school lyceum. An article for the local paper would be most welcome. But above all, be sure your meals are nutritious, eye-appealing, and tasty so the entire school community will be coming back for more!

Right: A greenhouse at the Willmar School District.

Below: Beet Taco and Chicken Fajita as served at the Willmar School District.

