



Support of USDA's New Meal Guidelines

This year at Chandler Unified School District, we have seen many positive outcomes and exciting developments from the new meal guidelines set forth by USDA. These new meal guidelines have put a spark back into the school breakfast and lunch program, and students are excited about some of the changes they are seeing. One of the most positive outcomes we have seen is the increase in acceptance and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by the students. We pre-package a side salad daily that has dark green leafy lettuce, a different red/orange vegetable like tomatoes, red peppers or carrots, and our homemade low-fat ranch dressing. Students have commented that they love the look of these new salads and feel that it is more hygienic than an open salad bar. The great thing about pre-packaging is that you can use them the next day and this reduces the normal waste you might throw away from a salad bar.

We have continued to conduct many taste testings and focus groups to make sure that our students are involved in the creation of the food we serve. As we have increased whole-grains in all of our homemade bakery items and reduced the sodium in our entrees, students have been instrumental in helping us develop an acceptable flavor profile for these items. We have partnered with them to make sure they are educated on the new meal guidelines and that they are part of the process. Students are more excited about the meals they eat if they feel they are part of the process.

We will continue to improve our menu to meet the new meal guidelines in the future. The key is to having an open mind and "having a healthy disregard for the impossible".

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