

Offer Versus Serve 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 their 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 their trays. Read below to find out more!

Understanding the Lunch Line

At lunch, all students should 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 for their meal. One of the selections must be at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable. 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.

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. 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 their food group offerings. Don't hesitate to reach out to Andrea Kelleher, Food Service Director at 219-987-4711 ex 1117 if you have any questions about the menu.