



## National School Lunch Program Parent Fact Sheet

### Q *What is the National School Lunch Program?*

The National School Lunch Program is a program that receives money from the Federal government to provide lunch in school. Schools that participate must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements. Schools must also offer free or reduced-price lunches to eligible children.

### Q *Why should children eat school lunch?*

- Students will eat healthful foods that have important nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals.
- Children who eat a healthful lunch learn better.
- Students who eat a school lunch eat more vegetables at lunchtime than students who don't eat a school lunch. They also drink more milk.

Colorful vegetables!  
Delicious fruits!  
Fresh, cold milk!

School lunch serves up good nutrition in an enjoyable way. Kid-friendly and value-priced, school lunch is a quick, low-cost (or free) option for today's busy families.

Here are some facts about the National School Lunch Program.

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# Q&A

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- School lunch is less expensive and more nutritious than packed lunches.
- Buying lunch at school also saves time during the busy morning.

### **Q** *What are the nutritional requirements for school lunches?*

The Federal government sets nutrition standards for the school lunch meal. These standards only apply to food that is served as part of the school lunch meal and do not include other food that is sold in the cafeteria or throughout the school. School lunches must provide a variety of nutritious foods such as breads or grains, fruit, vegetables, meat, and milk.

### **Q** *How do children qualify for free and reduced-price meals?*

Any child at a participating school may buy a meal through the National School Lunch Program. Children from families with low incomes may be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Prices for school lunch are low even for those children who pay the full price. Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program are required to tell families how to apply at the beginning of the school year. Families may also apply on-line at [www.COMPASS.state.pa.us](http://www.COMPASS.state.pa.us).

### **Q** *How can I get more information about the National School Lunch Program?*

In Pennsylvania, the Division of Food and Nutrition, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), oversees the National School Lunch Program.

#### **For more information:**

Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Division of Food and Nutrition  
333 Market Street, 4th Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
Phone: 1-800-331-0129  
Web: [http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food\\_nutrition](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition)

#### **Meals from the National School Lunch Program help build healthful eating habits for life.**

##### **School lunches:**

- ▲ Meet federal nutrition standards based on the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans."
- ▲ Feature a variety of menu items highlighting foods from the Five Food Groups.
- ▲ Provide age-appropriate portion sizes.

In addition to providing nutritious lunches, the National School Lunch Program gives children the opportunity to practice skills learned in classroom nutrition education.

