



Parents and Teachers FAQ

Question: Who regulates the school nutrition program(s) in local districts?

Answer: The United States Department of Agriculture regulates the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program. School Nutrition Programs also adhere to policies and regulations administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and local health departments.

Question: How is the School Nutrition Program funded in local districts?

Answer: The School Nutrition Program is a federally funded program and self-sustaining operation. Therefore, local monies such as property and school taxes do not fund the school nutrition program.

Question: Why does my child have to pay for lunch at High School when we did not pay before?

Answer: All Del Rio High School campuses are a part of the National School Lunch Program which requires applications for free & reduced meals. All Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade students are eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Program. This means all children attending elementary and middle schools will receive breakfast and lunch at no cost to families regardless of income status.

Question: How do I qualify for free and reduced meals?

Students may also qualify for no cost or reduced-price meals if the household or students in the home participate in certain assistance programs:

- All students in the household are eligible if any person in the household receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.
- Individual children may qualify if the student in the household is a foster child under the legal responsibility of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or a court.
- Individual students may qualify if the student is enrolled in Head Start, is homeless or a runaway, or is a member of a migrant family.

If a household does not currently qualify, any change in employment status or participation in one of the programs listed above may cause all children or some children in the household to be eligible for no cost or reduced-price meals. If that occurs, a household may submit a new application based on the change of circumstances.

Question: What if my child is allergic to milk, peanuts, etc.?

Answer: Schools participating in USDA's School Lunch and School Breakfast programs may be required to accommodate the special dietary needs of children with allergies. A recognized medical authority, such as a physician, must provide a written diet prescription. The diet prescription should be specific and provide clear information about what foods are to be excluded from the child's diet. If replacing one food with another, this too must be included in the doctor's letter. For example, if the child has a milk allergy, then the doctor's note must include that milk is to be replaced with juice or water. The CNP staff should follow the regular menu whenever possible in accommodating children with allergies. Good communication with the child, parents or guardian, and school health team are important in providing a safe environment for a child with food allergies.

Question: What is the procedure for my child to receive a weight loss or diabetic meal plan?

Answer: Meal planning begins with the written diet order or prescription. If a recognized medical authority, such as a physician, has provided a written diet prescription for weight loss or diabetic meal plan, the first step is to submit the written diet order to the school nurse and cafeteria manager. The diet prescription should be specific and provide clear information about the child's diet. For example, the daily caloric level must be clearly defined, the current meal pattern for a diabetic diet must be provided, etc. The goal of meal planning is to provide the child with a nutritionally balanced meal that provides adequate calories for normal growth and development and, if the child is diabetic, promotes normal blood sugar levels.

Diabetic Diet Prescription: The first step in working with a diabetic child, therefore, is to learn what method he or she is using. Depending on the variety of choices offered and the age and skill of the child in using exchanges or counting carbohydrates, the diabetic child may be able to manage his own meal planning without the school's providing a special tray or menu. The school health care team, including the child nutrition staff, should still communicate with the child and parent or guardian to ensure that adequate provisions are being made at school to help the child to self-manage.

Question: Why do teachers, adults and visitors pay higher meal prices?

Answer: Student meals are subsidized by USDA commodities and state reimbursements. The state does not allow Teacher/Adult/Visitor meals receive such reimbursements; therefore, the price is slightly higher.

Question: What is commodity food and why do we use it?

Answer: Commodity food is food that is made available to school districts through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The amount of food that a school district receives is based on the number of student lunches served. The type of food offered is based upon the extra commodity food available throughout the country.

Question: Why can't parents bring in outside food for fundraisers?

Answer: The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has created a new set of guidelines for Texas Public Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program. In an effort to fight childhood obesity, these rules restrict parents, student groups, faculty and administration from selling or providing restricted items during meal times. For elementary schools the restriction is extended throughout the entire school day. For more information about the TDA Regulations effective August 2004, visit the TDA website at <http://www.agr.state.tx.us/>.

Question: What does "offer vs. serve" mean?

Answer: Offer versus serve is a provision of the reimbursable meals program under which a student must or may be offered choices within complete meals but may select fewer items (three of five components at lunch and three of four components at breakfast) for the meal to qualify for federal subsidy.

The five components of the lunch meal include:

- meat or meat alternate
- fruit
- vegetable
- bread and grains
- milk

As long as the student takes three of the five items, the meal will be counted as a complete meal and eligible for reimbursement.

The four components of the breakfast meal include:

- meat or meat alternate
- fruit
- bread and grains
- milk

As long as the student takes three of the four items, one being a half cup of fruit or vegetables, the meal will be counted as a complete meal and eligible for reimbursement.

Question: What is the competitive food regulation?

Elementary Schools

An elementary school campus may not serve competitive foods (or provide access to them through direct or indirect sales) to students anywhere on school premises throughout the school day until the end of the last scheduled class. This does not pertain to food items made available by the school nutrition program.

Elementary classrooms may allow one nutritious snack per day under the teacher's supervision. The snack may be in the morning or afternoon but may not be at the same time as the regular meal periods for that class. The snack may be provided by the school nutrition program, the teacher, parents or other groups and should be at no cost to students.

The snack must comply with the fat and sugar limits of the Public School Nutrition Policy and may not contain any FMNV or consist of candy or dessert type items (cookies, cakes, cupcakes, pudding, ice cream, or frozen desserts, etc.) For more information on nutrition standards, visit the TDA website at <http://www.squaremeals.org/>

Middle/Junior High Schools

A middle or junior high school campus may not serve competitive foods (or provide access to them through direct or indirect sales) to students anywhere on school premises during meal periods. This does not pertain to food items made available by the school nutrition program. The competitive foods included in this policy do not include FMNVs, which are not allowed until after the last lunch period. For more information on nutrition standards, visit the TDA website at <http://www.squaremeals.org/>

High Schools

High schools may not serve or provide access to competitive foods during meal periods in areas where reimbursable meals are served and/or consumed. This does not pertain to food items made available by the school nutrition program. All competitive foods sold or provided to students must meet the nutrition standards listed in the TPSNP. For more information on nutrition standards, visit the TDA website at <http://www.squaremeals.org/> Sugared, carbonated beverages cannot be sold in containers larger than 12 oz. and are not allowed during meal periods in areas where school meals are served and consumed. No more than 30% of beverages in vending machines should be sugared, carbonated drink

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