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An Apple a Day, The Bellevue Way

Bellevue School District goes above and beyond new federal school lunch guidelines

The Bellevue School District is ahead of the curve when it comes to offering students healthy and delicious meals. In January, First Lady Michelle Obama helped launch exciting new national school lunch nutritional standards designed to combat childhood obesity. In Bellevue, students have already been eating healthy for years. “We’ve gone above and beyond the federal guidelines for years, making sure our students have meals that taste good and are good for them,” says Kathy Dumas, Nutrition Services Manager for the Bellevue School District.

The new rules from the United States Department of Agriculture require schools to offer fruits and vegetables to students every day, provide more whole grains, and also offer fat-free or low-fat milk options. Schools must also cut back on sodium, saturated fat and trans fats in their menus. These are the first major changes to federal school nutritional standards in 15 years. They double how many fruits and vegetables that students must be offered and require healthier alternatives to white bread and deep-fried foods. The new standards will be phased in nationwide starting with the next school year.

Students in the Bellevue School District have been enjoying these healthier meal options for several years. “We are really proud to be setting the standard for healthy school lunches,” says Dumas. “It’s exciting to see kids enjoying foods that are good for them and fuel their learning.”

For example, lunch menus in the Bellevue School District feature:

- **Fruits and vegetables** - Bellevue students can choose fresh fruits and vegetables like bananas, apples, carrot sticks and broccoli at every meal. Each meal includes a trip to a fresh salad bar. As often as possible, the produce served is grown in Washington.
- **Whole grains** – All garlic bread, rolls, hoagies and other breads are made with whole grains. Each month’s menu highlights a different whole grain. Kids are learning about and enjoying foods like whole wheat pasta, couscous and quinoa.
- **Milk** – Bellevue’s milk options go well beyond plain or chocolate. Students can select from hormone-free low-fat white milk, nonfat white or chocolate milk, lactose-free milk or soy milk.
- **Meatless Mondays** - The District has also joined the Meatless Monday public health initiative. Going meatless once a week reduces saturated fat intake. It’s also good for the environment, because meat production requires more energy than the production of many other foods. In addition, Meatless Monday exposes students to alternative protein sources, such as legumes, and provides the opportunity for them to learn about new foods.

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- **Healthy standards** - The District works with a Registered Dietitian who, in conjunction with the Nutrition Services team, has been lowering sodium, eliminating trans fats and increasing fiber in our meals.

But will kids eat it if they know it's good for them? Yes. These healthy options have been a hit at our schools.

Bellevue School District's Nutrition Services Department is committed to supporting educational goals for students by emphasizing the relationship between nutritious foods, good health and a satisfying life. Menus and nutritional information about all our meals, as well as more information about Meatless Mondays and our Fruit, Vegetable and Grain Program are available on our [Nutrition Services page](#).