

Range of perspectives on food service in schools and making healthy food choices

4-J Food Service

**By Holly Langan, Support Services Manager, Nutrition and Purchasing, Eugene 4-J
With Ben Guyton, Sodexo Representative**

4J is responsible for the staff in food service, while the management side of food service was outsourced over 20 years ago. Sodexo provides economies of scale in terms of purchases; consistency with USDA guidelines; ability to secure food inventory when a school district might not be able to; consistency in training and safety; some customization is possible i.e., Village School all-vegetarian menu.

We have a grant for fresh fruits and vegetables. "Oregon School to Farm" is to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Last year was first year for free breakfasts in all elementary schools. McCornack also provides free lunches to all students. Sodexo prepares menus, and are based on items available, but 4J has worked in some cases to modify it. 4J has sought input from McCornack students (5th graders last year)- some suggestions were free-range beef; bring back French toast sticks.

Free/reduced lunch must be renewed according to federal guidelines. McCornack is a CEP (Community Eligibility Provision) school. Eligible if 50% of families are eligible for free/reduced lunch. District provides meals at no cost. Hence free breakfast in all elementary schools this year.

Why are Nutrigrain bars offered to students:

Follow USDA requirements under My Plate to get free/reduced lunch. It is a grain-based program. 4J does not have option to change it because reimbursement is based on compliance. This bar does fit USDA profile from the standpoint of whole grains. It is also a quick "grab and go" and convenient for children in certain situations i.e., getting to school late and missing breakfast. They are offering sausage patties and hard boil eggs in the morning for brain power. As a school, they are open to changes families would like to see, for example, a different idea for a grab and go.

Re: cooking from scratch: many schools don't have the staff or facilities available. McCornack will get a stovetop soon though.

If we want to know nutrition info on particular items: Nutrislice is available and includes this info; it is a menu-based data base. Look for a particular menu, and then locate your food item. <https://4j.nutrislice.com/menus-eula>

Advocacy for Healthy Nutrition in Schools

By Kid Food Matters

The advocacy group, Kid Food Matters, started a decade ago. This group is comprised mainly of parents. They advocate for a scratch-based, nutrient-based, protein-based offerings including all the vitamins and minerals needed for a nutritious diet. They have worked with Sodexo on incremental changes; been a long, slow, process and still working to align 4J food choices with the vision they have for food offerings in schools. One of the founders of this advocacy group started the vegetarian kitchen at Village School. People who started this advocacy group have kids who are now in high school, hence this group has been working for change for quite some time! Kids needs to be eating good food and educated about what this look like. We are happy for this opportunity to talk about school food choices so we can reach out to others who are interested too.

A big part of our challenge is likely the USDA food pyramid. Other districts making significant changes were likely allowed to move away from corporate out-sourcing.

Making Healthy Food Choices

By Food for Lane County

Picky eating: how to promote healthy eating to get a variety of food in diet. Overall we are going in right direction when it comes to nutrition. For example: In the past, there used to be no recommendations re: sugar. There was no allowance per day. Sugar and fat was being looked at for their relationship with heart disease; focus on fat, but not sugar i.e., looking at sugar research and how it is connected to heart disease. Nutrition is one of the newest sciences as an applied science and how it is connected to long-term health. Research can be contradictory. Look at bulk of research and ensure it is peer-reviewed (science confirms that it holds its weight). Even if we had all the answers, it might not work with your kid.

Roles that kids have with food and dynamic at food table: there is a role for kids; a role for parents; and a role for both at the table.

Food preparation - both are involved: Kids more likely to be more interested in their food if they help prepare it, and if you can grow some of your own food - also a way to interest them. Can involve developmental tasks as well. I have taught Middle Schoolers - if you provide clear directions, it is amazing what they will eat and how excited they are.

When to eat- parents should create regular eating times because kids can rely on internal hunger cues. The more consistent, the better at stopping when they are full and eating when hungry.

How much to eat- kids should determine this. They decide if they are hungry.

How much to serve - Kids in HeadStart learn to serve themselves in family-style eating with some support/direction. Kids know how much they need to eat.

Food shopping- both should be involved. Good way to introduce food choices rather than have it be a "free for all". Give three options for breakfast AM (pick items you would buy anyway). Look at nutrition labels with them. Anything that ends with -OSE includes sugar. Suggest children find a cereal with the first three ingredients not sugar. How to deal with colorful/marketed cereal aisle? Prep kids first re: your expectations.

Playing with your food: both can be involved; will connect them to food. Throwing food is not OK. The meal should be pleasurable and talk about pleasant things so they associate food with positive and supportive topics; leave discipline for another time.

Decide what to eat: both should decide

What food to purchase: both should decide within reason

Modeling healthy food choices: both are involved; especially great for parents and older children

Elementary kids: Biggest influence for kids re: eating: is their parents

Middle school: Biggest influence for kids re: eating: is again their parents

High School: Biggest influence for kids: parents are dominant (particularly of same gender) and also the child's friends

Strong connection between what parents eat, and then kids eating a broad, healthy diet.

When to finish eating: kids decide; they respond to internal hunger cues. Children will go thru phases when they gain some extra weight because they are storing calories for a growth spurt. Don't be too concerned if they don't eat for a day or so, but if kids start to lose weight that is a reason to see a pediatrician.

Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters hand out was made available at the meeting and at McCornack office after meeting.

To make eating fun, think like a marketer - fun shapes, etc.

Next Meeting

-Spring Ways and Means

-Carnival: Have a silent auction. Need help and business sponsors.