

# **Why Should Your Children Eat School Meals? ...because Healthy Choices Abound!**

Taking steps towards better nutrition and health are always goals of the School Food Service Department. In our cafeterias these steps will include offering healthy plant-based or vegetarian options more regularly.

The food choices we make have been shown to directly impact our overall health. Studies have proven that those eating primarily a plant-based diet have lower body weight, as much as 18% less in men with an even greater benefit in women. The prevalence of diabetes, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol levels are also directly related to the levels of plant based foods in our diet. The less meat we eat and the more plant-based foods we eat, the lower the incidence of these diseases.

Several months ago, the Food Service Program conducted a survey for parents and students. One of the things you told us was that you'd like to see more vegetarian options on the menu. In 2011-2012, Food Service will offer more plant-based or vegetarian options as alternatives to the meat entrees:

- Veggie Taco Burger and Veggie Pizza Burger
- Pasta with Marinara Sauce (using Barilla Plus<sup>®</sup> pasta)
- Bean - Tacos, Taco Salads, Nachos Grande and Burritos
- Pasta Fazool Hearty Soup with a Cheesy Bread Stick
- Spinach Dinner Salad.

These are in addition to our current vegetarian offerings: Macaroni and Cheese, Yogurt Parfaits, Toasted Cheese Sandwiches served with Tomato Soup, Cheese Quesadillas, Cheese Pizza and Italian Dunkers. We also offer an ever increasing variety of fruits and vegetables. As these plant-based options become more popular selections, more selections will be added.

The Food Service Program is committed to offering healthy meals to our students. Here are some additional facts about the foods we offer;

- We include many whole grain food options
- Our meals have zero trans fats
- Most cheeses are low fat
- We use Barilla Plus<sup>®</sup> pasta, which is a whole grain, high fiber, high protein pasta
- We do not fry any foods
- We have significantly reduced fat, sugar and salt in all offerings, including snacks
- We use healthy food preparation techniques.

As we move towards meeting the new 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, be assured that our menus will always reflect good health!