

CDE Reviews New School Lunch Program

The California Department of Education's Nutrition Services Division performed a rigorous, in-depth, three-day review in March of Del Mar's new and improved National School Lunch Program which was implemented on October 2nd, 2006. All 17 different areas of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) were reviewed and are in compliance with State and Federal regulations. With reports and studies indicating a national epidemic in increased childhood obesity and diabetes, the District is proud to offer parents the healthy choice and convenience of our voluntary NSLP. Throughout the year, parents always have the choice of providing a lunch from home or opting to have their student participate for as few days as convenient according to family schedules and needs.

The components of a nutritionally balanced school lunch are an entrée, fruit, vegetable, and a low fat snack. Included in the meal is the choice of low-fat white milk, or non-fat chocolate milk. During the process of picking up their lunch, each student has the choice to select which two side dishes they would like from the day's pre-posted offerings, and are also able to select all. Current menu choices have evolved from tracking student interest and adjusting entrée selections according to popularity of items.

Dena Whittington, District Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, is to be commended for her enthusiastic, hands-on approach to successfully implementing the District's new National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The reviewer's comment, "Congratulations to Ms. Whittington for her knowledge, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn, and, mostly, to provide nutritious food and nutrition information to the student population. I look forward to a long working relationship with Ms. Whittington."

The menu will continue to change in the future in an effort to utilize fresh seasonal ingredients, fresh regional fruits and vegetables, and increase fiber content. One suggestion, using wheat bread instead of white on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, has already been implemented.

One area that the reviewer noted needed to be reworked is the processing of the free and reduced lunch applications. There were minor record keeping issues that did not result in a penalty for the district and a revised procedure has already been written with the Business Office utilizing the suggested changes. The reviewer also suggested automating the manual part of the claiming process to increase accounting accuracy. The Cafeteria Fund Budget was reviewed for the 2006-07 school year and all revenues and expenditures are properly recorded in the district's Cafeteria Fund.

The NSLP is a voluntary program, and parents always have the opportunity to provide a lunch from home. To view the monthly menu, download a monthly order form, or learn more about child nutrition, please go to the District home page at www.dmusd.org and select *Child Nutrition* from the left side menu. Working together, we will nurture healthy, happy, well-educated, productive members of society!