

Opinion: LTUSD ahead of federal lunch guidelines

By Shelley Giannotta

First lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack released the new standards for school meals Jan. 25.



While I support and encourage ongoing changes and improvements to school meals, I am disappointed to read what Obama had to say. It is unfortunately a generic statement that put all school meals in a negative light.

“As parents, we try to prepare decent meals, limit how much junk food our kids eat, and ensure they have a reasonably balanced diet,” Obama said. “And when we’re putting in all that effort, the last thing we want is for our hard work to be undone each day in the school cafeteria. When we send our kids to school, we expect that they won’t be eating the kind of fatty, salty, sugary foods that we try to keep them from eating at home. We want the food they get at school to be the same kind of food we would serve at our own kitchen tables.”

As I review the new standards that have been released, I am so proud of what we have accomplished here at LTUSD over the past 12 years. We are already doing so much of what is considered “new” according to these standards.

- We offer more fresh fruits and vegetables than ever before.
- We offer only 1 percent or non-fat white or non-fat chocolate fluid milk.
- We ensure that students are getting appropriate portion sizes.

- We monitor sodium levels – we don't add salt to any foods.
- We have improved breakfast choices to include more protein (yogurt, eggs).
- There is no trans fat in any of our food.
- Nearly all breads, buns, grain items, and pizza products are at least 51 percent whole grain.
- We use brown rice and whole wheat pastas – very little white rice or pasta.
- New offerings such as sweet potato products, homemade hummus, improved entrée salads.
- In 2008, we formed a Farm to School connection with Mt. Moriah Farms.
- We eliminated all deep fat frying in 2001. All of our potato products are baked – never fried.

I know that we can and will continue to make improvements in regard to the 1,800 lunches and the 700 breakfasts that we serve to our student customers every day. I stand behind what we have done to date at LTUSD. I appreciate all of the hard work, dedication, and positive attitudes that the Food Service employees bring to their jobs and our valued student customers every day.

I always remind folks that participation in our meal program is voluntary. It is a choice for students to eat our meals – and we will continue to improve, listen, and offer a great meal for a reasonable price.

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