

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides federal funding for District schools to serve fresh produce to their students. The program is available to elementary schools that serve a high number of low-income students. The schools that are selected will receive free healthy snacks several times a week for the entire student body.

What are the benefits of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program?

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is a great way to:

- Promote student wellness to combat D.C.'s childhood obesity epidemic
- Cultivate healthy snacking habits by introducing students to a wide variety of produce such as cucumber, grapes, or pears
- Improve achievement by keeping students fueled in mid-morning or mid-afternoon when their energy may be low
- Implement DCPS' Local Wellness Policy, which sets standards to foster student health and wellness in each school

How and where is the produce served?

The fresh fruits and vegetables must be served as a snack outside of the breakfast and lunch times. It can be offered as a mid-morning snack, between breakfast and lunch, or in the mid-afternoon after the lunch period. The produce can be served in the cafeteria or from hallway kiosks, or it can be delivered to each classroom in a cart or tray. For in-classroom service, each class can designate a student helper to go down to the cafeteria to pick up the produce.

Isn't there lost instructional time in the classroom with a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program?

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program generally takes about 15 minutes to serve and eat and is often done in the mid-morning or mid-afternoon when student attention may be low. Teachers report that they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer disruptions, nurses visits, and higher concentration levels.

Do I have to spend school dollars to operate the program?

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is federally funded by the USDA. Chartwells-Thompson will provide all of the produce, kitchen labor, and serving supplies (forks, spoons, napkins, plates, etc.) needed for the preparation of these snacks. If your school chooses to employ additional staff to oversee the program, some of that cost may be reimbursed by the USDA. Nutrition education is another aspect of the program that must be carried out at each school, but many schools obtain free or donated materials, or incorporate nutrition education into ongoing lessons or activities.

Doesn't the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program generate a lot of trash and mess?

Trash is a frequent concern before the program begins, but schools that have introduced the program have not experienced problems. Typically the produce is served with

minimal packaging. Many schools deliver a large trash bag to the hallway or classroom and the students throw away their own garbage. After the trash is collected, the bag is secured to avoid spills and left for custodial staff to collect. Communicating your Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program plan with the custodial staff is key smooth implementation. Within that plan, explain how you recommend dealing with trash and be open to custodial staff suggestions.

How much work is involved for the school to do this program?

Satisfaction with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is high. Once schools start the program, it quickly becomes very popular among students, teachers, and administrators. Of course, there is some additional work to administer a new program. Some key school responsibilities include:

- The principal must designate a school representative to administer this program. The representative must track any expenses the school accrues for administration that you wish to have reimbursed by the USDA.
- This representative must also communicate frequently with the kitchen staff and with Chartwells-Thompson to ensure that the program is carried out correctly.
- Since the produce children receive in school might be their first exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables, the school must provide nutrition education. The nutrition education can vary from a simple brochure, to a 5-minute lesson, to a cooking demonstration. Nutrition education need not be simultaneous with snack service, and a school could use programs already in place to satisfy this requirement. Any cost associated with the nutrition education is not covered by the program, so your school will be responsible for obtaining free or donated materials, or purchasing these materials with school funds.

What kinds of fruits and vegetables will be served?

As the title of the program states, only fresh fruits and vegetables may be served to students. Therefore, items such as celery sticks, fruit salads, bell peppers, broccoli, and kiwi are all possible products that can be served as part of the program.

We always offer fruits and vegetables along with breakfast and lunch, but it sometimes it gets wasted. How will this program be different?

The majority of the produce served through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is served raw – which is a new and exciting taste for students. Students are also served a wide variety of items besides the typical apples and oranges, and may enjoy experimenting with new produce such as jicama, starfruit, or fresh spinach.

For more information on the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, contact:

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