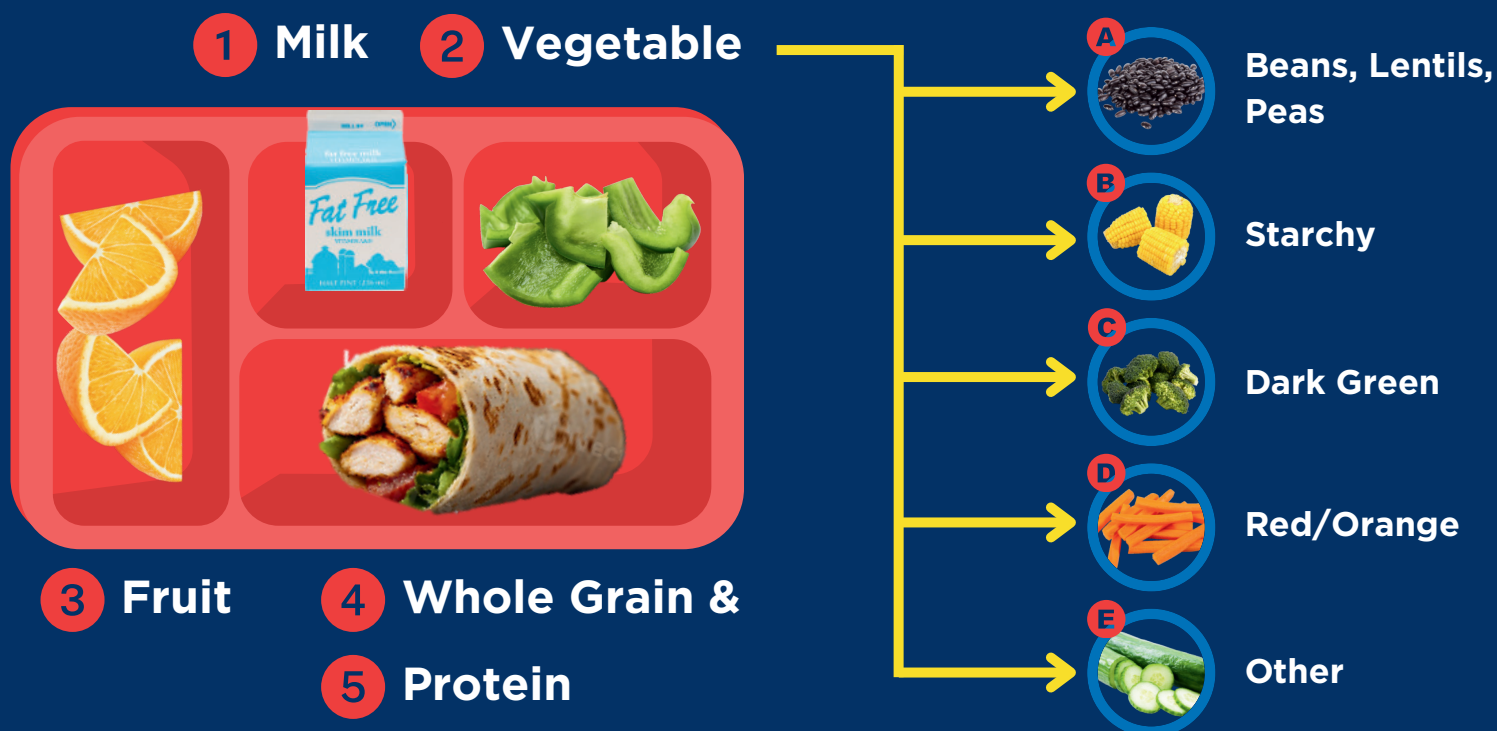


# What's on the Menu: A Guide to School Lunch Standards

School meals are **FREE** for **ALL** students!

Schools are *required* to:

1. offer a range of healthy foods daily from 5 food groups<sup>1</sup>:
2. serve 5 different types of vegetables every week



For it to count as a free meal, students have to take **3** of the **5 food groups** offered (and one must be a fruit or vegetable)

\*\*\*All students can receive one complete meal daily.  
Schools are not allowed to provide only milk or second meals *for free* (some schools allow students to *purchase* these additional items).



These strong school meal guidelines are associated with many benefits for students including healthier diets (including eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains), improved school attendance, and better academic performance<sup>2-4</sup>!

**Sources:**

1. United States Department of Agriculture. Nutrition Standards for School Meal. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/schoolmeals/nutrition-standards>
2. Au et al. Eating School Meals Daily is Associated with Healthier Dietary Intakes: The Healthy Communities Study. J Acad Nutr Diet 2018;118
3. Gearen & Fox. Updated Nutrition Standards Have Significantly Improved the Nutritional Quality of School Lunches and Breakfasts. J Acad Nutr Diet 2020;120
4. Cohen JF, Hecht AA, McLoughlin GM, Turner L, Schwartz MB. Universal school meals and associations with student participation, attendance, academic performance, diet quality, food security, and body mass index: A systematic review. Nutrients. 2021 Mar 11;13(3):911