



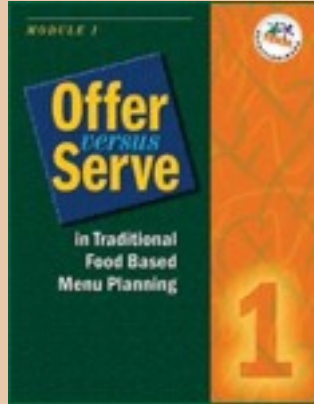
Offer Versus Serve

This program allows students to decline items they do not want. Offer Versus Serve is an acceptable option under the United States Department of Agriculture.

Offer Versus Serve (OVS).

OVS is a provision with two major goals: (1) to reduce food/plate waste in school nutrition programs, and (2) to permit students to select only the foods they want to consume.

Depending upon the agency/district menu planning option, OVS allows students to decline one or two items at lunch, and allows the sponsor to claim the meal for reimbursement. Implementing OVS is intended to decrease the amount of



food/beverage waste; hence, less food may end up on sharing tables or in the garbage. While OVS is required for lunch at the high school level, it is optional for all other grade levels.

When offered a food choice, along with options for portion sizes, sauces, dressings, or toppings, students are more likely to eat the food items selected instead of wasting them. This may result in food waste reduction, helping school districts save money. Moreover, with more choices, cafeterias may find that more students purchase lunches, resulting in increased revenue for the school. Also, with this approach, students tend to consume more fruits and vegetables because they choose what they like. Inviting student participation in menu planning, meal preparation, feedback, and taste tests is a way to gain more student support and decrease waste. Students must take 3 of the 5 items. One of the three must be a 1/2 cup serving of fruit or vegetable.

What schools are doing

Sibley Elementary School - Waconia

Sibley Elementary uses the "Offer Versus Serve" approach to food service. Children are presented with the five food groups, and when purchasing school lunches, they must buy from a minimum of three of the groups. This eliminates the need to dispose of unwanted

food. Sibley teachers also take a lunch count each morning. This way the lunchroom staff knows exactly how much food to prepare, resulting in less waste. Extra food is only made as needed. No extra food is prepared for unexpected visitors. It is made to order. By anticipating the needs of each grade level, the lunchroom staff is able to have the right quantity available. That makes for fresher food, and fresher is better.

Minnetonka Schools

Minnetonka schools practice a "take, not serve" philosophy in the food service lines, so kids only take as much as they intend to eat. All adults, including teachers, food service personnel, and parents work together to enforce these policies, reducing food waste.

Resources

USDA Offer Versus Serve Training Manual

http://teamntrition.usda.gov/Resources/offer_v_serve.html