

Education on the Menu at CISD

Celina Independent School District's Food Service Department easing the burden of parents in the district by providing information and support.

Every parent knows the essential role healthy meals play in a student's learning but for parents of children with circumstances requiring special dietary requirements, nutrition becomes a main focus of not only their child's learning, but of their everyday lives. Dietary needs require constant attention, which is why it is essential that school staff, including administration, teachers, bus drivers and school health personnel, understand the needs of their students to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

Celina Independent School District's Food Service Director, Ofelia Almendarez, understands these needs and has been working tirelessly over the summer on a plan.

[Almendarez or Superintendent quote]

In addition to creating a healthy and balanced menu for each of the five CISD schools, Almendarez has put together comprehensive binders of nutritional facts for every item on the breakfast and lunch menus, including main courses, sides and even condiments offered. The information will provide the amount of calories and nutrients in one serving of food, as well as the specific CISD recipe including any potential allergens. Nutrients include fats, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Once the campus menus have been finalized, Almendarez will provide the nutritional binders to each of the campus nurses. [Almendarez or Superintendent quote]

As the district grows, so does the number of children affected by food and dietary issues, such as Type 1 Diabetes, Celiac Disease and severe food allergies. CISD campuses will now have access to key information and tools that will allow them to continue to provide a paramount environment for success, health, and safety for all Celina students.

The American Diabetes Association suggests over 200,000 children are living with Type 1 Diabetes and according to Food Allergy Research and Education, 1 in every 13 children (under the age of 18) has a potentially deadly food allergy. That's roughly two in each classroom.

For children with Type 1 Diabetes, having an accurate carbohydrate content count in food is perhaps the most important piece to effective blood sugar management. Prior to the district providing this information, these parents were forced to either pack a lunch for their child each day, ensuring correct insulin dosage based on carbohydrates, or simply guess at the carbohydrate count and insulin dosage for the school lunches. Ronda Hefton's son, Chet, was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes over Christmas break in 4th grade at age 10. They are now preparing for his eighth grade year at Celina Junior High School. Hefton says the work of the district will have a positive impact on her son's health as well as his school experience in general. "Having access to this information empowers Type 1 parents to help their kids plan as well as ease the burden so they can experience a somewhat normal lunch with their friends", says Hefton, "and what parent wouldn't want that?"