**United States Department of Agriculture**

Food and Nutrition Service

3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

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Dear School Food Authorities:

As we celebrate National School Lunch Week, I want to thank you for all of your efforts to serve healthy meals in America's schools. As a result of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, our Nation's school children now have access to more nutritious school meals and snacks. Your continued efforts to implement the updated school meal nutrition standards are commendable, and children are now trying and consuming more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains each school day than ever before.

Currently, children ages 6-18 years in the U.S. consume approximately 3,300 mg of sodium per day. This is far greater than the daily *maximum* of 2,300 mg of sodium recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. High sodium intake is a major concern as it is related to an increased risk of high blood pressure, which can begin in childhood. Over the past several years, you have worked diligently toward meeting sodium target 1, and I applaud your hard work as you rose to this challenge.

To assist you in achieving sodium reduction in school meals, USDA is collaborating with the food industry, public health organizations, and other stakeholders on a national sodium reduction initiative entitled *What's Shaking? Creative Ways to Boost Flavor With Less Sodium.* The goals of this initiative are to:

- Increase awareness of the need for dietary sodium reduction;
- Expand the number of sodium reduction tools and resources available to schools while increasing the use of these resources; and
- Highlight activities in the private and nonprofit sectors that are helping schools achieve the sodium targets.

Over 35 national associations and organizations have already signed on to partner with USDA in the *"What's Shaking?"* initiative, and the number continues to grow. This is great news for schools and students across the country. It means that you, your staff, and families will have access to more resources, recipes, menu ideas and sodium reduction strategies, skill-building trainings, and lower sodium product options from which to choose. Many of these resources can be found on our "*What's Shaking?*" Web site, which serves as a convenient hub for resources on sodium reduction and healthier meals at home and at school.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Additionally, I am excited to share with you our new newest infographic (enclosed here) for school nutrition professionals. This infographic will help you communicate with your staff, families, and the school community about the importance of sodium reduction, and garner community-wide support for your efforts to boost the flavor of school meals with less sodium. Please share this infographic widely and highlight your school meal program successes.

I greatly appreciate your continued dedication to the success of the Child Nutrition Programs, and it is our goal to continue to support you. You play the most vital role in supporting our children's health and well-being, and increasing awareness of sodium reduction in the school and broader community is one important step toward ensuring a healthy environment where our Nation's children live, learn, and play. Let's continue to support each other on this journey of feeding children in a way that can create a lifetime of healthy habits.

Sincerely,

Kathryn T. Wilson

Kathryn T. Wilson
Deputy Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

Enclosure