

Guide

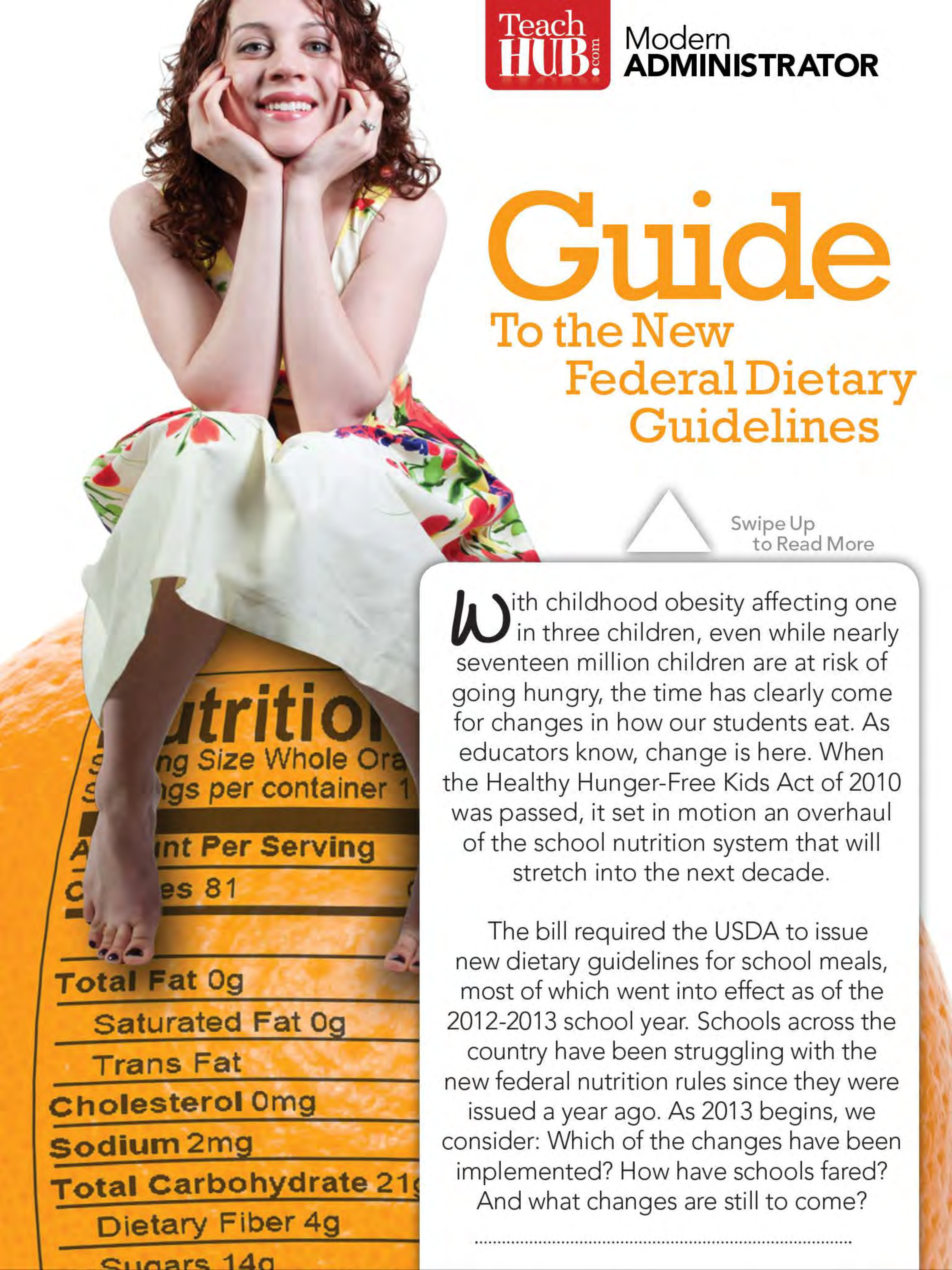
To the New Federal Dietary Guidelines

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With childhood obesity affecting one in three children, even while nearly seventeen million children are at risk of going hungry, the time has clearly come for changes in how our students eat. As educators know, change is here. When the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 was passed, it set in motion an overhaul of the school nutrition system that will stretch into the next decade.

The bill required the USDA to issue new dietary guidelines for school meals, most of which went into effect as of the 2012-2013 school year. Schools across the country have been struggling with the new federal nutrition rules since they were issued a year ago. As 2013 begins, we consider: Which of the changes have been implemented? How have schools fared? And what changes are still to come?

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Nutrition
Serving Size Whole Orange
Servings per container 1
Amount Per Serving
Calories 81
Total Fat 0g
Saturated Fat 0g
Trans Fat
Cholesterol 0mg
Sodium 2mg
Total Carbohydrate 21g
Dietary Fiber 4g
Sugars 14g



The New Guidelines to Date

In January 2012, the USDA published their new Dietary Guidelines for school meals, as well as an implementation schedule for those rules. The two programs affected were the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). The major changes included:

- **Establishing** differentiations in requirements for elementary, middle, and high school students
- **Serving goals** (minimums and maximums) for five meal components: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Meats (or Meat Alternates), and Milk
- **Set limits** on saturated fats, trans-fats, and sodium
- **New Guidelines** on calorie intake, including minimums and maximums
- **Offer versus Serve** (OVS) guidelines, establishing choices for students' lunches
- **3-year** administrative review cycle to monitor schools' programs

For the NSLP, most of these changes went into effect this school year. For the SBP, only regulations on milk fat and saturated fat have been implemented, with most changes to come next year.

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At the heart of the Dietary Guidelines is the dual mandate of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act: provide students with enough food so that the neediest don't go hungry, while taking steps to curb the childhood obesity epidemic. The result is a complicated balancing act for schools. With fats and sugars being cut out, as well as new limits on how much meat and grain can be served, where will all the calories come from?

Rollouts and Rollbacks

The new guidelines are the first major changes many schools have seen to their lunch programs in 15 years. Thousands of hours of work have gone into revising menus. Establishing new recipes that meet all the nutritional requirements while satisfying students' tastes and keeping to tight district budgets has been a task fraught with pitfalls. Some schools have gone so far as to hold student taste tests, adjusting menu items to feedback about which of the new healthy items are tasty or intolerable.

Although most schools have successfully put the new rules into practice, the rollout hasn't been without its critics. There have been protests by students, complaining that the new lunches lacked taste or were too small. Teachers and administrators often make the same point—for kids who are very active during the day, school meals can seem insufficient. Is the price of combating obesity leaving some students hungry?

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| Nutrition Facts | |
|---|---------------------|
| Serving Size 1 cup, quartered or chopped (125 g) | |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories 65 | Calories from Fat 2 |
| % Daily Value* | |
| Total Fat 0g | 0% |
| Saturated Fat 0g | 0% |
| Trans Fat | |
| Cholesterol 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium 1mg | 0% |
| Total Carbohydrate 17g | 6% |
| Dietary Fiber 3g | 12% |
| Sugars 12g | |
| Protein 0g | |
| Vitamin A | 1% + Vitamin C 10% |
| Calcium | 1% + Iron 10% |

In response to these critics, the USDA has recently reversed itself on one of the most contentious parts of the new rules: the weekly limits on how much grain and meat/meat substitute can be served. Schools will now be able to serve more proteins and grains—provided they stay within their calorie guidelines. The move should make it easier to meet nutritional goals, and please students who don't find fruit very filling.

What's to Come

With new, healthier menus in cafeterias across the country, it's tempting to think that the big changes are all over. And it's true that over thirty million students are already eating healthier lunches every day—but some 12 million students will also be seeing changes at breakfast. A variety of other changes are still in the works, too.

With new, healthier menus in cafeterias across the country, it's tempting to think that the big changes are all over. And it's true that over thirty million students are already eating healthier lunches every day—but some 12 million students will also be seeing changes at breakfast. A variety of other changes are still in the works, too.

Here's the timeline:

2013-2014

The school year will see new calorie guidelines going into effect for school breakfasts. Further, breakfasts will need to meet the same standard for the use of whole-grain-rich foods that lunches do now.

This year will also mark the beginning of the new 3-year administrative review cycle for both lunch and breakfast programs. States will have to certify that school food authorities (SFAs) are in compliance with the new rules after receiving documentation

2013

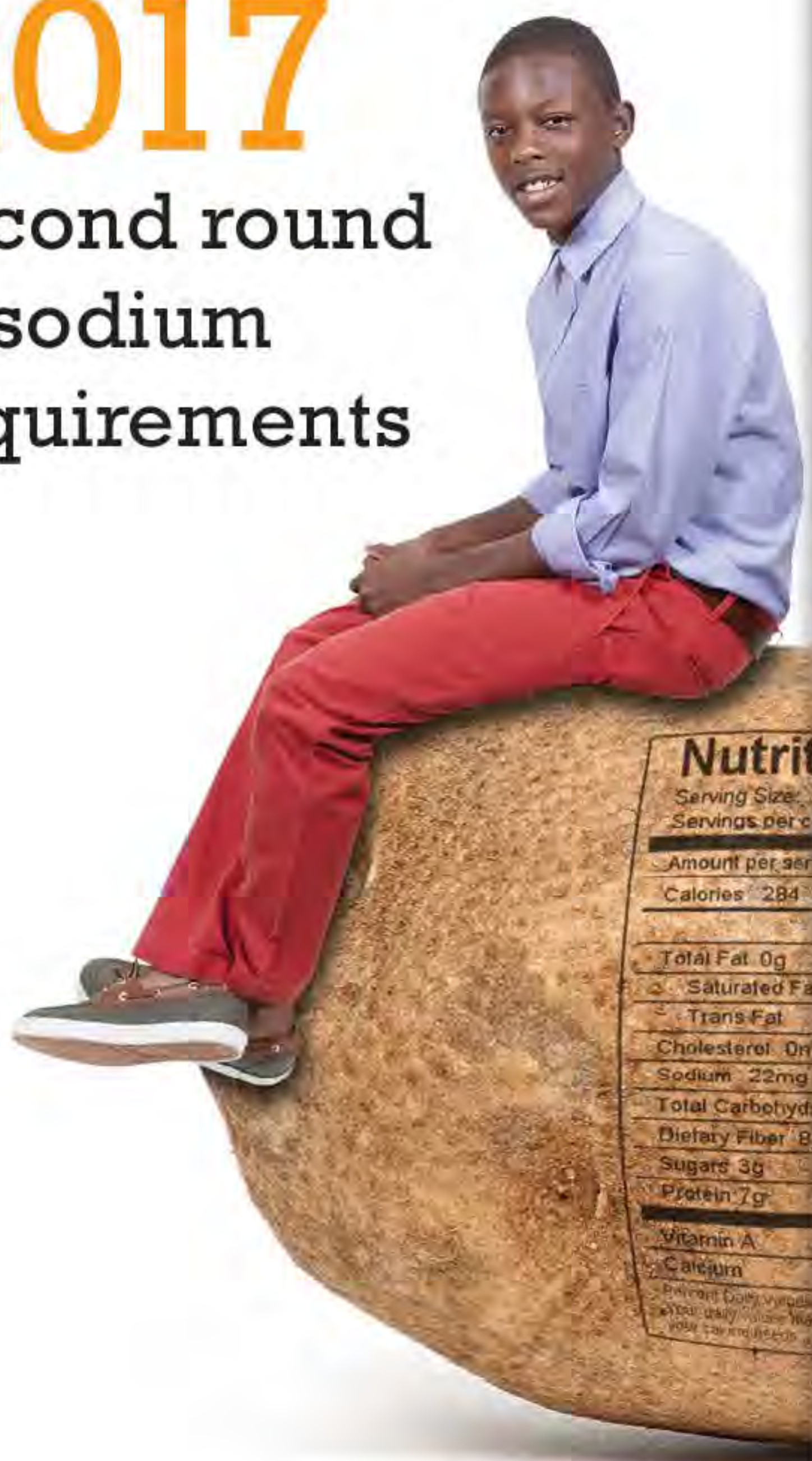
Calorie guidelines
for school breakfasts

2014

Whole-rich-grain
up by 50%

2017

Second round
of sodium
requirements



the new rules after receiving documentation from the SFAs. This can be achieved either with nutrient-analysis of the SFA's menus, or with an on-site inspection by the state.

2014-2015

A number of new targets will be implemented. The first of three progressively strict sodium requirements for lunch and breakfast will be rolled out. Not only that, but all grains served as of Fall 2014 must be whole-grain-rich (containing at least 50% whole grains), up from only 50% today.

Breakfast quantities of fruit will increase this year, and breakfast will also need to comply with OVS goals.

Beyond

The second round of sodium targets will go into effect in the 2017-2018 school year, with the final targets set for 2022-2023.

Perhaps more significantly, the USDA has yet to release revised rules for the Pre-K program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, or the Afterschool Snack program. As of now, schools are simply being encouraged to make healthier choices for these programs.

It remains to be seen if the USDA's recent modifications of their rules will pacify the opposition to the new dietary guidelines, or if more changes are still to come. What is clear is that administrators and teachers are working in an environment of complex goals and competing interests. As more new rules come down the pipeline and the results of current initiatives become more obvious, we'll find out how much progress has really been made. Until then, change may well be a fact of life for school cafeterias throughout the United States.