

NAVIGATING SCHOOL WITH HCU

A Elementary Experience

by Bridgett Zaidi

Having your child's school agree to and cook low protein meals can seem so daunting! Most people don't even know what a metabolic disorder is, let alone how to prepare a low protein meal.

I was a nervous wreck when Kaden first started school, but I knew with him spending more hours in the day at school than at home, I needed help from the school to provide him with a balanced variety of meals. Every child wants a feeling of belonging and to not stand out, so Kaden was excited to buy a hot lunch, go through the lunch line like his friends and have that lunch cafeteria experience. He is now in the 5th grade and he's still able to get that experience through establishing the following groundwork:

For a public school, your first step would be to set up a 504. A 504 is a law abiding document you create with the school for special accommodations due to disabilities. Ask your child's school for a 504 meeting and bring a doctor's note stating your child's diagnosis. Be prepared to provide all accommodations you would like your child to have. By law, these accommodations have to be provided to your child once the school signs off on it. These are the 504 accommodations we were able to get for Kaden as reference:

Kaden's 504

1. Cafeteria is to cook a low protein meal 3 days a week. Menu or meal rotation is to be created and not changed unless parent is notified. Cafeteria staff is only to serve foods approved of by parents
2. Child is allowed separate snacks to be kept in the classroom
3. Child is allowed to use the nurse's fridge/freezer for food storage as needed
4. Child is to receive medical formula daily after lunch
5. Daily communication or pictures of lunch or foods eaten at school

Have the school district cafeteria manager attend the 504 meeting, as well as the school's cafeteria manager. Provide them the meals you want them to cook and what serving size you want your child to have. You can have them provide a written menu or you can agree on a rotation. The school district cafeteria manager is responsible for creating menus and ordering foods for the school, so they incorporate a menu and food order for your child to go along with the district.



Below is an example of the rotation we setup for Kaden. His rotation changes a bit each year at his discretion.

Monday: low protein food, one of these choices

- 3 Tweekz
- Cambrooke bread stick
- ½ Flavis pizza crust with pizza sauce and broccoli
- Cambrooke bigger bagel
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Wednesday: Tacos

- 2 corn taco shells, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes, 1 oz of salsa

Friday: French fries

- 100 grams of cooked, french fries, dipping sauce of his choice



Kaden with his two younger brothers.

When we created this menu, the cafeteria manager was able to tell me all the fruit and vegetables they serve as sides and the measurement they serve. Kaden is allowed to pick whatever fruit/vegetable combinations he'd like, as well as what juice he'd like to drink. If your school has a side or drink you don't want your child to have, ask the cafeteria manager to notify staff of the "allergy". Most schools have a place where allergies or food restrictions can be referenced for students and seen by all staff. Kaden has some of the following restrictions; no milk, peas, corn - which come up on the computer screen every time he pays for his lunch.

The school is not allowed to charge extra for your child's meal in Arizona, but keep in mind that this might vary state to state. The low protein foods ordered are covered by the district under the 504 document and the disabilities act.

The process of having the school serve Kaden lunch has evolved over the years. When Kaden first started to buy lunch, we had the cafeteria send before and after pictures of his plate. This gave me some comfort that they were executing his lunches correctly. They kept a school tablet in the kitchen for the staff to use. On days he bought school lunch, they took a picture before he had lunch & when he was done eating. He would take his tray to a lunch aide for an after picture. Both pictures were emailed to me daily by 3 pm. We stopped doing before and after pictures of lunch in the 4th grade when we felt he was responsible enough to let us know what he ate that day

Couple of other things to note:

- Cambrooke does have school lunch support! They can help your school put together an individual menu for your child, as well as educate the staff on how to prepare all foods.
- Snacks

in the classroom are easy to make available to your child if you choose. I bring in a plastic bin to keep in the classroom, full of protein free snacks that Kaden is allowed to eat from freely. We do gluten free pretzels, fruit snacks, fruit cups and spoons, individual bags of freeze dried fruits, etc. When the box was down to the last few snacks, the teacher sent it home to be refilled. We also keep a box of popsicles in the nurse's freezer for when the class has birthday/classroom treats Kaden can't have.