

## EZ DOT EXPLAIN A MEAL SYSTEM

The Explain a Meal Dot System helps students identify the components required to qualify as a USDA meal. There are five components the USDA requires to compose a meal: vegetable; fruit; grains; protein; dairy. The Offer Vs. Serve system allows the students the choice of taking all five of the components or at least three of the five components, one of which must be a fruit or vegetable.

To help students identify the meal components, Offer vs. Serve flyers are posted at the beginning of the serving lines in the elementary and secondary grades.



Elementary cafeterias also use the EZ Dot System to help students identify the meal components. Colored dots corresponding to the food component, such as green for vegetables, are placed below the corresponding food component. This makes it easy for the students to know they must take a green (vegetable) or red (fruit) and can still get the other three colors (components) or a least two more

components. These have been very helpful in explaining the program to the younger students. The cashiers love EZ Dots too. When a student reaches the cashier station and is short a meal component, the cashier can easily tell them they need to get something from the, for example, red (fruit) section. The student then knows to pick one of the choices from the section with the red dot.



Offer Vs. Serve allows the student to make choices while saving on food waste. A vegetable or fruit, plus two more components, is the minimum to qualify as a meal.