

FRIENDLY SCHOOL CANTEEN IS A COMPETITION AMONG TALLINN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS INITIATED BY THE TALLINN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

It has been conducted annually since 2008; and Tallinn Health Care College students have been participating in this project from the very beginning. The main goal of the project is to collect daily menus of all school canteens in Tallinn (for the time period of 1 month) in order to analyze and evaluate them on the subject of the (appropriate) GDA content and control whether they satisfy the governmental regulations for food supply in schools.

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Extra benefits of the competition are:

- Motivate catering companies to cooperate with school management and the Health Council to ensure high-qualified, healthy and balanced diet in all municipal schools.
- Encourage caterers, school leaders, teachers and parents to promote healthy food choices since it is during school period that children are adopting habits which they will keep for the entire life
- Increase children's awareness of healthy eating and food culture, and motivate them to do appropriate adjustments in their eating habits
- Reward the best caterers and chefs to raise their motivation and professionalism



The competition consists of 4 stages. The first and the second stage are carried out by students. During stage 1 menus are picked from the schools' web-pages for the period of four weeks.

During Stage 2 the menus are analyzed and evaluated according to the set of criteria [1][2]:

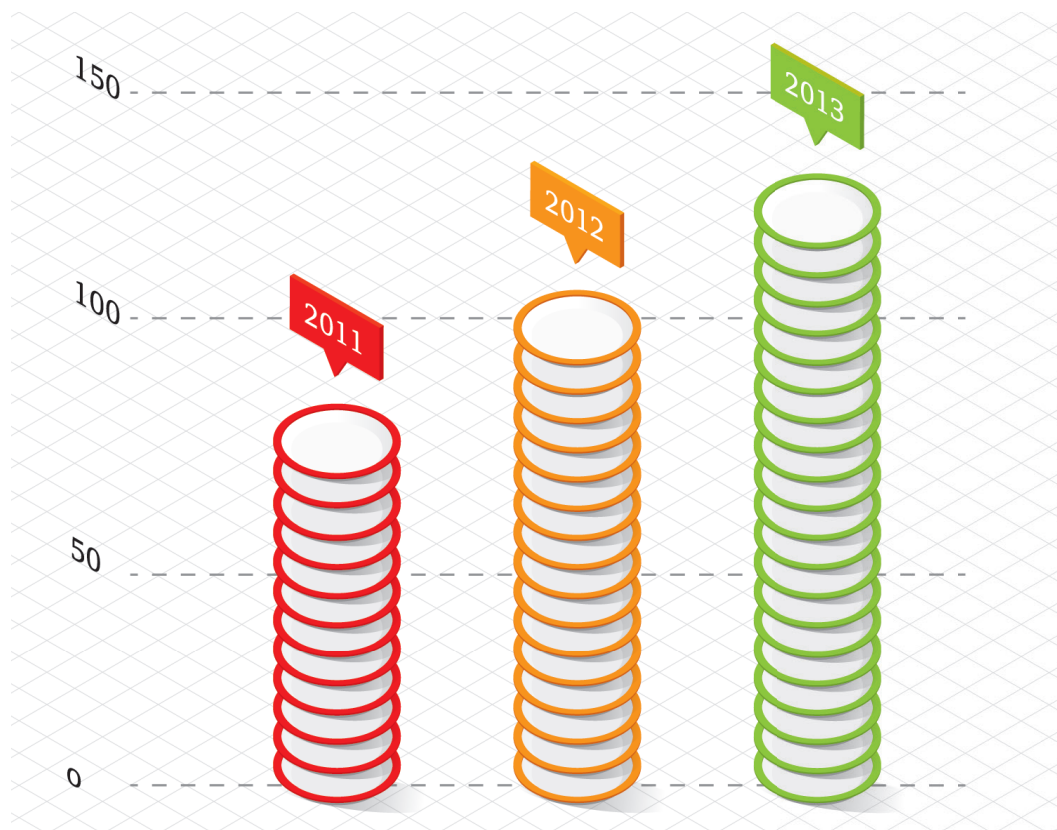
- Lunch break duration at least 15 minutes
- Drinking water is offered every day
- Different main course is offered every day
- Warm main course is offered every day
- Milk is offered every day
- Bread is offered every day
- Information on nutritional values indicated
- Garnish choice
- Salad choice
- Salad components are healthy
- Fresh vegetables are offered every day, cooked vegetables are served at least 2 times a week
- Fresh fruit at least three times a week
- Fish at least once a week
- Meat or poultry at least three times a week
- Pasta is offered no more than twice a week (preferably from wholegrain flour)
- Mayonnaise in small amounts and not more than three times a month
- Sausage products used no more than once a month
- Meals consisting liver no more than twice a month
- No product containing hydrogenated vegetable fat
- No chewing gum or candies for desert
- No energy or sports drinks
- No artificially sweetened water-based drinks
- No artificially enriched products



There is a ten-point scale to evaluate each estimated criterion. No points are obtained for non-compliance or lack of accurate information, 10 points for the excellent results. The maximum possible number of points is 230.

Data collection is conducted in February, analysis takes place in March-April, and the results are summarized in the final report. The next stages are conducted by the officials of the Tallinn Department of Education.

The Tallinn Department of Education team then visits the top ten schools to check the school canteens and test the quality of the food served to children. In conclusion, the three best schools are awarded by the Tallinn Department of Education.



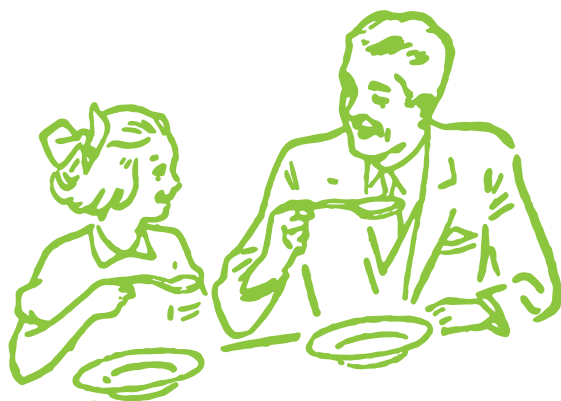
The results throughout the years 2011-2013 show a stable increase in the grade point average.

Positive sides:

- Schools are motivated to provide children with meals of better quality.
- Every year the project is revised and improved in order to provide more objective results.
- The model of the project is simple and can be used in any region or country.

Points of improvement:

- Schools are rated on the basis of the menus picked from the web-pages. Actual quality of a meal served to children is tested only at the ten best schools.
- Schools may lose points due to the lack of data provided on the web-page.
- Set of criteria which is used to evaluate school menus should be more rigid in order to provide more objective information.



References:

- [1] Health Requirements for pre-school and school catering, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/13360799?leiaKehtiv>
- [2] Estonian food and nutrition recommendations, http://www.terviseamet.ee/fileadmin/dok/Keskkonnatervis/toitumine/Raamatu_sisu.pdf