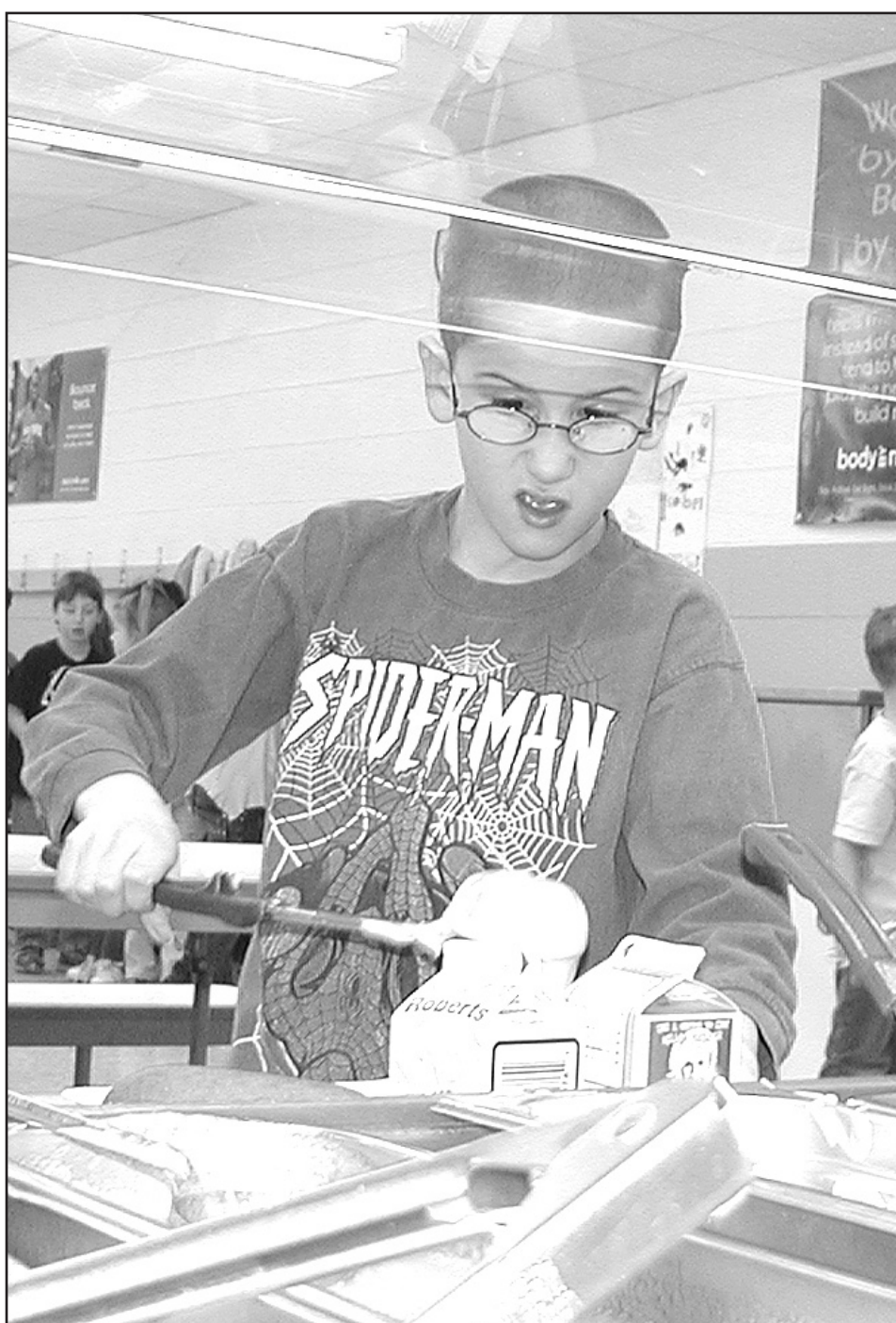




AT LUNCH at Oberlin Elementary School, Adric Ray held his corn dog up after taking a bite. After eating, he headed to the playground with his classmates.



WITH A LARGE SPOON, Ayden Gullion put a helping of pudding on his tray.

Students get to choose what they want to eat

The boy dipped the end of his corn dog into a gob of ketchup before he took a bite.

It was lunch time at Oberlin Elementary School, and the long tables were full of hungry kids. A handful had carried a lunch from home, but most were eating the school hot lunch.

Some added applesauce, pudding, lettuce, mandarin oranges or various other fruits to their trays.

Principal Duane Dorshorst said they use an "offer" program for lunch at the grade school. Basically they offer the food instead of serving to the kids what they are supposed to eat. With offering, he said, they are trying to teach the kids to make wise food choices. Also, said Mr. Dorshorst, they have found if they offer the food and the kids get to choose what they eat, not as much goes to waste.

The students have to take three different items, he said. They can take a serving of the entree, one of apples and a serving of oranges, or a corn dog, milk and a fruit or vegetable.

Lots of times, he added, the kids



KATIE MEITL smiled before she grabbed a carton of milk out of the large cooler.

will take more than three.

In the last five years, said Mr. Dorshorst, the school started making all of the meals in the high school kitchen and then hauling the food

over to the grade school. Before that, the district had to subsidize the food service program, he said, but now it's self sufficient.

The students break into groups for two lunch shifts. The first one starts at 11:20 a.m. with the kindergarten through third grade eating. Mr. Dorshorst said they try to start the kindergarten a little earlier and then get them out to recess a little earlier so that they can fit in gym class and music.

The second shift, the fourth through sixth graders, eats at 11:55 a.m.

After the 20-minute lunch break, he said, all of the kids get a 20-minute recess.

Mr. Dorshorst said the students don't have to clean their plates, but they are asked to at least try what they take.

On average around 175 to 180 students eat a hot lunch daily. There are 207 kids enrolled in the grade school.

Linda Weber, food service manager is in charge of ordering the food and preparing the menus.