

## SCHOOL NUTRITION Q&A

### 1. What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in over 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. It helps provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children across the country.



### 2. Why are the school lunches so strict?

Schools that choose to take part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and USDA foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve in which the USDA sets these guidelines. In return, they must serve lunches that meet federal requirements, and must offer free or reduced-price lunches to eligible children. The goal is to link the school lunchroom environment with the current dietary standards with an aim to reduce the child obesity epidemic and childhood hunger.

### 3. Why does my child have to take a ½ cup of fruits and vegetables each lunch?

Part of the USDA guidelines for school nutrition require a serving (1/2 cup) of fruits and vegetables at each lunch. In order to make the meal reimbursable, the child must follow these guidelines.

### 4. What if my child does not want a fruit or vegetable?

We offer a wide variety of options for children to choose from but if they do not want anything, we still have them take something so the meal is reimbursable. If while they are eating, the child decides they still do not want the fruit/vegetable, they can return it as a “pass back”.

### 5. Why must I pay full price for my lunch while my child does not?

A child purchasing lunch from the school qualifies for being reimbursable through the government--granted they took all the required components. Adults are not eligible for reimbursement and therefore, must be charged full price.

### 6. How long is my free and reduced application good for?

The current school year and 30 days into the following school year. Every new school year a new application will need to be submitted.

### 7. My child does not like milk. Can they substitute a milk for a juice?

Milk offers more nutrients for your child than juice and because of this it, juice cannot replace milk. A child does not have to take milk at lunch if they do not want it. A 4 oz juice can be taken as part of the ½ cup of fruits, but they will need another fruit as well.

**8. I see you offer products like pop-tarts, lucky charms, and other sugary foods. How is this allowed?**

Our food products are specially made for school nutrition. While they appear to be the same products you find on grocery store shelves, these items we serve fit our school guidelines. For example, the pop-tart is whole grain, lower in sodium and lower in calories than the store bought one.



**9. What do I do if my child has a dietary restriction?**

We strive to accommodate all children's dietary needs. Please make sure you have a doctor's order for the allergy, and we can further work with you and your child to provide the best meal possible.

**10. I sent in my application for free & reduced last week. When will it take effect?**

The date in which the office receives the application will be considered the qualifying date. Prior to acceptance, parents are responsible for the cost of the meal.

**11. My child qualifies for free meals so why do I get low fund notices?**

It is possible your child is ordering extra or a la cart items during meals which would not fall into the "free" category.

**12. I want to track what my child is eating. Is that possible?**

Of course! You can use your My School Bucks which can be accessed through our district website.

**13. Must I fill out a free & reduced form for every child in the household?**

No, one form for the entire household is all that is needed.

**14. My child brings their lunch from home, why can't they get a milk for free?**

A milk is a part of the reimbursable meals. If a child brings their own lunch, they are not reimbursable eligible. A milk will cost .40 cents.

**15. Can I eat with my child during lunch?**

Yes, as long as you call the office before 9am.

