

## Frequently Asked Questions about Elementary School Meals

### **How much do student school meals cost?**

Fargo Public Schools (FPS) participates in the USDA's School Lunch Program. This program provides monetary reimbursement from the Federal Government to the school district for every meal served. These meals are generally referred to as "reimbursable". This funding helps cover the cost of serving the meal so that it can be provided to students at a reduced price.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the USDA will cover the full cost of providing school meals due to the COVID pandemic. All students will receive free school meals for this school year.

### **Should I submit an application for Student Fees Assistance and Benefits even though meals are free this year?**

This application form is also known as **Free and Reduced-Price Meals Application**.

*Households are encouraged to submit an application even though meals are free.* Students who qualify receive additional benefits in addition to free meals.

- Receive waived (cancelled) fees related to attending school such as activity fees, band rentals, exam fees, application fees, and more.
- Increases funding to the district for educational programs through Title 1 funding, foundation aid, e-rate for technology grants, and others.

In a normal (non-pandemic) year where students are charged a fee for meals, households may apply for financial assistance to pay for school meals by submitting this application. For students qualifying for Reduced Price meals, breakfast is free (the state of ND pays the \$0.30 fee) and lunch is \$0.40. Students qualifying for Free meals receive school meals at no charge.

For more information on financial assistance for school meal programs, go to <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals>

Each student is allowed one reimbursable breakfast and lunch (at the above price) per school day. Additional meals are priced at the advertised "Adult" meal price.

### **Are school meals available to adults and other non-students?**

Employees and visitors to the school are welcome to eat in the school cafeterias. Financial assistance is not provided to the school district for these meals, so the price for these meals is higher (a minimum of \$0.65 per federal guidelines). For the current school year, breakfast is \$2.15 and \$3.50 for lunch. Portion sizes are the same for student and non-student meals.

### **What menu options are available to students choosing a reimbursable school meal?**

The USDA has established guidelines for meals to qualify for reimbursement. These guidelines also apply to meals served as part of the Free and Reduced Price assistance program. The guidelines require students to take at least 3 of the 5 meal components offered at lunch. Of the 3 or more components chosen, at least one serving must be a fruit or vegetable. For a breakfast meal, students must take at least 3 of the 4 meal components offered and must have a minimum of one serving of fruit.

Students may choose to take all of the meal components (4 at breakfast, 5 at lunch) at the school meal price. Two components might be combined in one offering. For example, a slice of breakfast pizza with eggs, cheese, and crust provides a meat/meat alternative component and a grain component. The slice of pizza would count as 2 components.

In elementary schools, only reimbursable meals are served and available for purchase with the exception of cartons of milk. If students don't take enough of the required components, they will be asked to put an additional item on their trays. Students are not forced to take or eat food. However, if a student refuses to add the necessary items to their tray to comply with the guidelines for reimbursable meals, the meal will be charged at the Adult price.

### **Can students bring their own lunch and get milk from the school?**

Students may bring their lunch from home. Students may purchase cartons of milk in the lunchroom for 35 cents. Students are encouraged to take at least 2 additional items with the milk to make a full reimbursable meal (see previous question) which is provided for free. Students wanting to purchase a single carton must have funds available in their lunch account or in cash. Items cannot be charged.

### **How can I manage my student's lunch account?**

Balances may be reviewed by logging into the [PowerSchool](#) parent portal and clicking on SchoolPay. Through SchoolPay, parents may check balances, deposit money into student accounts electronically, and setup low balance notifications. Electronic payments may be made using credit, debit, or bank account. Money can also be added to an account at the school's office or by mail. Parents are encouraged to discuss spending expectations with their child/ren. For further details, visit <https://www.fargo.k12.nd.us/Page/2008>

**For more information on the USDA National School Lunch Program, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>**