

# Frequently Asked Questions about 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 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 2018 school year, breakfast at middle and high schools is \$1.55 and \$2.65 for lunch.

Households may apply for financial assistance to pay for school meals. For students qualifying for Reduced Price meals, breakfast is free (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 for these meals, so the price of these meals is higher (a minimum of \$0.65 per federal guidelines). For the 2018 school year, breakfast is \$2.15 and \$3.45 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 three of the meal components offered at lunch. Of the three or more components chosen, at least one serving must be a fruit or vegetable. For a breakfast meal, students must take at least three of the four meal components offered and must have a minimum of one serving of fruit.

For the school meal price, students may choose to take all the meal components (four at breakfast, five at lunch) and two servings each of fruits and vegetables.

Two components may 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 two components.

### **What are “extra” or “a la carte” items?**

Menu items that don't fall within the guidelines of a reimbursable meal do not qualify for funding from the Federal Government. Therefore, the school must charge the customer the full price necessary to cover the costs of serving that item. Charging the full price for individual items, called “a la carte,” can happen in a few different instances.

For example, a reimbursable lunch meal includes up to one serving of milk, one serving of meat/meat alternative, and one serving of grain along with two servings of fruit and two servings of vegetables. Any servings taken that exceeds these guidelines are considered extra and are charged at the full or a la carte price.

In another example, if a student doesn't take enough of the required components for a reimbursable meal, they will be asked to put additional items on their tray. Students are not forced to take or eat food. However, if a student declines to add the necessary items to their tray to comply with the guidelines for a reimbursable meal, the items on the tray will be charged at the a la carte price.

In this last example, middle and high school cafeterias offer extra food items that are always only available at a la carte pricing. These items cannot be counted as a component of a reimbursable school meal. Extra items offered meet the Smart Snack nutrition guidelines and can be healthy additions to meals when eaten in moderation.

### **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 any spending expectations with their child/ren. For further details, visit <https://www.fargo.k12.nd.us/Page/2008>

### **What should students be encouraged to do for a healthy balanced meal at the best value?**

Parents can encourage students to start with a reimbursable meal and take advantage of all the components and servings included. This will ensure students are exposed to healthy fruits and vegetables with enough food to fuel them throughout the day.

Parents are also encouraged to discuss expectations for any limits on purchases of extras and a la carte items.

**For more information on the USDA National School Lunch Program, including requirements for menu offerings and portion sizes, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>**