

Frequently Asked Questions about Secondary 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.

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 “extras” 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 do students pay for “extras” or “a la carte” items?

Students choosing to purchase these items will be required to provide their student ID number so that the purchase can be recorded. Students must have funds available either in their lunch account or in cash at the time of purchase. Purchases cannot be charged and paid for at a later time.

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

Can I request that the school stop my student from making food choices and/or purchases?

Parents are expected to discuss expectations for any limits on food choices and purchases along with spending limits. Nutrition Services staff are not able to enforce requests for spending limits as this cannot be discussed privately with the student during meal service. Students needing accommodations due to medical or behavioral circumstances can make a request through the school counselor (behavioral) or by completing the Special Menu Request Form (medical) available on the Nutrition Services FPS webpage.

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.

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>