

Introduction to School Meals

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program is a federally funded program providing nutritionally balanced lunches to children each school day. Schools that participate in the program receive financial assistance and donated commodities for each meal they serve. In return they must serve meals that meet federal nutrition requirements and must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children. In addition, ala Carte soy milk, 100% fruit juice and bottled water are available for purchase if your child does not have a negative account balance.

School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program is a federally funded program. Financial assistance is given to schools for each breakfast served to children, which meets the USDA breakfast meal pattern requirements. Portage Public Schools participates in the School Breakfast Program.

Menu Planning

The Director of Dining Services plans breakfast and lunch menus based on availability of products and student preferences. Input for these menus is received from many sources including students, parents, food service staff, school staff and other school districts. All menus are planned to meet the Meal Pattern Requirements established by the USDA.



Portage Public Schools
Food Service Department
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What is my child eating at school?

Q: *How can I keep my child from purchasing items for lunch that I would prefer they not have?*

A: The most effective way to handle this is for you log onto www.SendMoneyToSchool.com and directly place the restrictions on your child's account. You may also e-mail, US mail or FAX your wishes to the Food Service office. We can display a message on the student's account screen that reflects those wishes. For example: "\$1.90 per day limit" or "School lunch only". Whenever your child uses their account, they will not be allowed to purchase over the limit you have set.

Q: *What is a School Lunch?*

A: A School Lunch is the term used by the USDA to define a lunch that meets their requirements for a reimbursable meal. It includes 5 components: meat/protein, fruit, vegetable, bread/grain, and milk. Your child is offered all 5 components daily; they must choose 3 to 5 to qualify as a school lunch.

Q: *How much money should I send for my child's lunch?*

A: The price for a School Lunch for the 2011-12 school year is \$1.90. To pay by the month, use the \$1.90 x 22 days (the average number of days per month) = \$41.80.

Q: *What if my child has special needs or diet restrictions?*

A: Please contact the Director of Dining Services at 269-323-5155.

Q: *What if I have questions about the school lunch program?*

A: Please do not hesitate to call the Food Service office with any concerns that you may have. We will be happy to assist you in any way that we can. Your Director of Dining Services can be reached at 269-323-5155.

Q: *I have filled out an application for meal benefits, how will I find out if I qualify?*

A: Once your application is **processed**, you will receive a letter indicating your benefit level. **Until your application is processed, you are financially responsible for any meals consumed by your child.** Applications from the previous year expire 30 days after the start of school or when the new school year application is processed. **Applications must be filled out every year per federal law to maintain eligibility.**

2011 - 2012 School Meal Prices

Elementary Breakfast - \$1.25
Elementary Lunch \$1.90
Adult Lunch \$2.75
Milk \$.45

A school lunch includes your entrée, and your choice of a vegetable, fruit and half pint of milk.

At Portage Public Schools, we provide an offer vs. serve environment so students may select a combination of food items they prefer to complete their meal. In order to purchase a meal for \$1.90 students must choose an entrée plus 1 - 3 of the vegetables, fruits and beverages listed below.

Entrées can include one of four daily menu selections. The two menu'd items on the published menu, a daily rotating special or a Chef Salad.

Vegetables include: vegetable of the day, or fresh vegetables that are located on the Fresh Food Bar. **Fruits** include: fruit of the day or a piece of fresh fruit.

Beverages include: half pint of white or flavored skim milk.

The Point of Sale System

As Portage Public Schools student, your food service account will be accessed through a computerized point of sale (POS) system to make your purchases in the cafeteria. Each morning students will select their lunch choice in their classrooms. Choice selections will be sent to the kitchen for preparation.

Student Food Service Accounts - All students at Portage Public Schools automatically have a food service account set up on the day they register within the district. This account will follow them through their entire Portage Public Schools career.

Payments – Pre-payments are accepted by credit card, check, money order, or cash and can be for any denomination. Credit card payments can be made online through www.SendMoneyToSchool.com. Note: There is a \$1 convenience fee to utilize this method of replenishment. Checks or Money Orders should be made out to Portage Public Schools. **All payments should be placed in a sealed envelope with your child's name and student ID number as well as the teacher's name.**

Checks – When you pay with a check, you will not be allowed to receive cash back. Checks will be deposited to your child's account for the full amount for which they are written. **Counter/starter checks and checks drawn off of a business account cannot be accepted for student meals.** Checks returned for non-sufficient funds will be assessed a \$25 service fee.

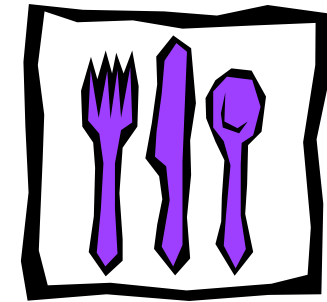
Withdrawals – Your account is not a bank account. Money on your lunch account is for food purchases only. We do not allow students to withdraw funds from their account at any time. The only exception is if a student moves and the parents provide a written request to withdraw their money. A check will

be prepared by the District and mailed to the address on file with your school within 30 business days.

Negative Balances – Negative balances need to be cleared up as soon as possible. Each week, negative balance letters are placed in teachers mailboxes to be sent home with students. Students may charge up to two school lunches (\$3.60), once that level is reached, an alternative lunch will be provided. You will not be allowed to purchase snacks or ala carte. All negative balances must be paid by the end of the school year in order to avoid collection action.

Meal Benefits – If you have been approved for free or reduced price meals, your status will be entered into the computer. Meal Benefits are applied on the date the application is processed in the computer. **Please note that until your meal benefit application is processed, you are financially responsible for any meals consumed by your child.** The Meal Benefit program is a completely confidential program. Your child's classmates will not know if your family is a recipient of this benefit. If you have not gotten a letter in the mail regarding your eligibility status, you should contact the food service office.

The Elementary Food Service Program



at
Portage Public
Schools

In Partnership with:

