

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. How are the menus planned?

Menus are planned at the district level by a Culinary Specialist and Registered Dietitian. The menus must meet certain guidelines as set forth by the U.S. government as part of the National School Lunch Program and National School Breakfast Program. All elementary schools have the same menu, PHMS has its own menu, and PHHS has its own unique menu. Various choices are available daily at each school.

## 2. What qualifies as a reimbursable (Free, Reduced, or Paid price) meal?

SMCSC meals must meet certain meal patterns to qualify as reimbursable meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. A basic meal consists of the following:

<u>BREAKFAST</u>	<u>LUNCH</u>
1 breakfast entrée	1 serving Protein
Up to 2 servings fruit/vegetable	1 serving Grain
1 milk	Up to 2 servings Vegetable
	Up to 2 servings Fruit
	1 Milk

Students have the option of declining part of their meal. For lunch, a student may decline one or two categories. **At lunch, students must take at least 1 serving of a fruit or vegetable to receive the meal price.** For breakfast, students may decline either the fruit/vegetable or the milk.

## 3. How do I know which items are part of a reimbursable meal and which items are sold ala carte?

At the elementary level, there are no ala carte sales. Every item offered is part of the reimbursable meal. The only ala carte options are the purchase of extra items (i.e. milk, extra entrée, extra bread). At PHMS and PHHS, there are many items that are sold as ala carte that do not count as part of the reimbursable meal. Examples of items that are always ala carte include large drinks, cookies, baked chips/pretzels, cottage cheese, and more. All items are marked with the price and whether or not the item is part of the meal or ala carte. If a student purchases extra servings of meal components, those will be charged at an ala carte price. All ala carte foods meet USDA "Smart Snacks in Schools" standards.

## 4. How much does a reimbursable meal cost?

Current meal prices are as follows:

	<u>Grades K-8</u>		<u>Grades 9-12</u>	
	Reduced	Paid	Reduced	Paid
Breakfast	\$.30	\$1.60	\$.30	\$1.75
Lunch	\$.40	\$2.30	\$.40	\$2.40 / \$2.90

## 5. I receive free or reduced price lunch and breakfast. What exactly can I purchase at this price?

The free or reduced price is for a **FULL** meal that meets the requirements of at least 3 categories, 1 being a fruit or vegetable. You must meet the requirements of this meal to receive the meal at a free or reduced price. You can purchase ala carte outside of this if you have money on account, but it will not be included in a free or reduced price meal. Multiple entrée choices are offered at each school. You may purchase ANY entrée as part of your free or reduced price meal. At PHMS and PHHS, you may build a reimbursable meal that will qualify at any station in the cafeteria.

**6. I receive free or reduced price lunch and breakfast. If I pack my lunch from home, can I get a free milk?**

No, not by itself. By completing a meal application, you are eligible to receive a free or reduced price MEAL. The regulations are written to ensure that each meal served meets all the requirements of a healthy, balanced meal. Certain components of the meal cannot be singled out, an entire meal must be purchased. A student could get a fruit, vegetable, and milk at the reduced or free price to enjoy with the food brought from home (fruit, vegetable, milk counts as 3 categories and therefore a complete meal).

**7. Will the other students know if I receive free or reduced price meals?**

No. You will purchase meals just as any other student.

**8. How are portion sizes determined?**

The government regulates the portion sizes of foods that are considered part of the reimbursable meal. The meal pattern specifies the minimum number of servings and portion sizes for each of the required components. Serving sizes are adjusted to meet the nutritional needs of students according to age. Meal prices are calculated based on the recommended serving sizes.

**9. How nutritious are school meals?**

Both lunch and breakfast must meet certain nutrition requirements as required by the government. Meal patterns must meet 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of key nutrients for lunch and 1/4 of the RDA for breakfast. There are required nutrient standards for Calories, five key nutrients (protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C), Total Fat, and Saturated Fat.

**10. How do I pay for meals?**

There are three options to pay for meals: cash, check, and online payment with debit or credit card at [www.EZSchoolPay.com](http://www.EZSchoolPay.com). None of our schools accept payment during lunch—all payment must be paid into student's account prior to breakfast and lunch. At elementary level, money should be sent in an envelope and is collected daily. PHMS and PHHS have prepayment kiosks in which money can be deposited each morning. This is in an effort to serve students as quickly and efficiently as possible. Each student has an account in our computer software program that will follow the student from grades K-12.

**11. How are accounts accessed at the point of sale?**

At the elementary level, students enter in Homeroom, Alphabetical order. Students only need to say their name to the cashier. At the secondary level, we use a biometric (fingerprint) identification system for the added security this system provides.

**12. What are the advantages of using EZSchoolPay.com?**

There are many! It is easy to use, safe, and allows parents to track what their students are purchasing. Also, it is FREE for parents to use! SMCS greatly encourages the use of EZSchoolPay.com because it is a very efficient and safe way of collecting money for student accounts. EZSchoolPay.com ID codes can be found by contacting the Nutrition Services Department or your child's school or on your Powerschool parent page.

**13. What are government commodity foods? Are these items of good quality?**

Commodities are food items that are purchased by the USDA and allocated to school corporations at a reduced cost depending upon availability. Commodities must meet high quality specifications as do all other food purchases. Commodity foods only contribute to about 20% of our total food purchases.

**14. Why is an adult/ visitor meal a higher price than student meals? Isn't the amount of food served in each the same?**

The Nutrition Services Department receives varying amounts of reimbursement for each student meal we serve. We receive NO reimbursement for adult/visitor meals. As a result, adult/visitor is charged a la carte pricing which reflects the actual cost of the meal.

**15. Who do I contact if I have additional questions about my child's meals?**

You can contact your child's cafeteria or Lindsey Hill, Director of Nutrition Services at 765-778-2152 ext. 1015.