

Back to School: What you need to know about Free School Meals

Forest Lake Food & Nutrition Services offers breakfast and lunch for students at all Forest Lake Area Schools. Starting this fall, Governor Walz signed the Free School Meals bill into law. This legislation provides one free breakfast and one free lunch per day. The state funded Free School Meals Program must follow USDA guidelines for all school breakfast and lunch meals. These standards ensure meals are healthy, well balanced, and provide adequate nutrition they need to succeed at school.

What does this all mean for my students?

Can students get second meals for free?

No, this legislation provides a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch per day to students. A second breakfast and/or a second lunch is considered an a la carte item and priced at the adult meal rate.

Can schools sell a la carte items?

Yes, Forest Lake Schools sells a la carte items that meet the federal Smart Snacks Requirements. Smart Snacks guidelines have reduced calories, sodium, fat and sugars to ensure students are only offered tasty and nutritious foods during the school day.

If a student brings their own lunch and only wants a milk, do we charge them for the milk or does it count towards the one free lunch?

A milk by itself does not meet the minimum requirements to be claimed for one free lunch. A milk alone is considered a la carte pricing and sufficient funds must be in your students account to purchase a milk.

Can a school deny a second meal, second entrée, or a la carte item if the student does not have money in their account to pay for it?

Yes, Forest Lake Area Schools are not required to provide second meals, second entrees, or other a la carte items if a student does not have the funds available to pay for the item(s).

Interactive Menus

The Food & Nutrition Department has interactive online menus. *My School Menus*™ allows easy access to complete nutrition information for the school meal program anytime, anywhere.

Features of *My School Menus*™ include:

- Complete list of all food choices available to students
- Nutrient data for menu items
- Ability to Build-A-Meal and create customized meals
- Ingredient information for certain menu items
- Allergen identification within menu items
- Translations to 180 languages using Google Translate
- Download *My School Menus*™ mobile app in iTunes or the Google Play Store.
- Visit our Online Menus at: <https://www.myschoolmenus.com/instance/845/district/865>



Using PayPAMS

PayPAMS is designed to provide parents with a safe and convenient way to prepay for students' a la carte meals and snacks online. Register at paypams.com and you can:

- Prepay for a la carte meals and snacks
- Schedule automatic payments
- Receive low balance email reminders
- View daily spending and cafeteria purchases on a la carte items

Meal Benefit Application Information:

Do I still need to collect Applications for Educational Benefits?

Yes, federal regulations require applications to be distributed. Schools should continue to collect Applications for Educational Benefits to determine if a student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals.

Why is it important to continue to collect Applications for Educational Benefits?

Students and families may qualify for other program fee reductions based on their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals in the school district and community education programs. Additional benefits include: reduced activity fees, musical instrument rentals and other reduced costs.

Additional federal reimbursement is available for the school district that meets the severe need criteria based on free and reduced-price eligibility.

Apply Now:

To qualify for these benefits, families must renew a meal benefit application each year. To apply for these benefits, you can either: Apply online for meal benefits at flaschools.org/nutrition or complete the paper application included in the center of this newsletter. Please return all paper applications to the District Food Service Office, Forest Lake Area Schools Education Center, 943 9th Ave SW, Forest Lake MN 55025.

Additional Information:

| 2023-2024 School Meal Prices | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| | Breakfast | Lunch |
| Elementary | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Secondary | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Free/Reduce | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Adult | \$2.50 | \$5.00 |
| Milk | \$0.50 | \$0.50 |

