

TONKA FRESH

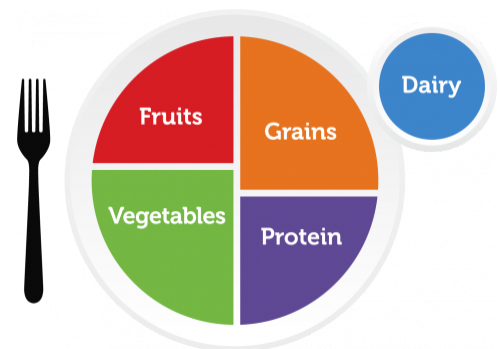
A Monthly Newsletter from Minnetonka Nutrition Services *August 2025 - Back-to-School Edition*

Welcome to Tonka Fresh, the official newsletter of Minnetonka Nutrition Services! We are excited for your student(s) to participate in our free school Breakfast and Lunch programs. To help ease you back into the new school year, here are answers to some commonly asked questions about Nutrition Services.

Q: We are a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) School Meals Program. What does that mean?

A: As a USDA school meals program, the funding for Minnetonka Nutrition Services comes from the federal and state government's budgetary allocations for school meal programs. In order to receive this funding, the USDA has guidelines for meal patterns that are reflected in the school breakfast and lunch menus. These guidelines align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

At breakfast and lunch, students are required to select items from at least three food groups - the same groups seen on MyPlate (image on the right), including $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit or vegetable. The menus are designed with multiple options in each category so students can be creative in designing their own balanced meal. With all of the requirements met, students at Minnetonka may receive one free breakfast and one free lunch daily. If a student's meal does not meet these guidelines, our program does not receive funding for that meal, and the student's meal account will be charged the actual cost of the meal.



These meal pattern guidelines from the USDA not only include the required food groups, but they also provide guidance on calorie ranges for each age group, as well as limits on nutrients such as sodium and saturated fat. Having these guidelines in place ensures that the meals offered to students during the school day are appropriate for their nutritional needs.

Q: If meals are free for all students, why do we still have the Application for Educational Benefits (AEB), also known as the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Program?



A: While the State of Minnesota offers one free school breakfast and one free school lunch to all Minnesota residents students daily, the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Program is at the federal level. The amount of federal funding a district’s nutrition services program receives depends on the paid, free or reduced-price meal status of each student.

For families that qualify for the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Program, there are additional financial benefits available to the family and the school. This is a confidential program that families must apply for each school year. The application is called the Application for Educational Benefits, and it can be accessed on the [Nutrition Services website](#).

Q: What is Available For My Student During Breakfast and Lunch?

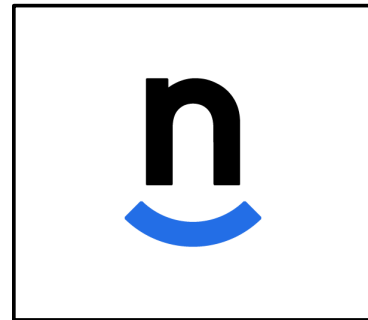
A: During school breakfast, the serving lines are set up with grab-and-go style foods that students can pick up on their way into school and enjoy once they arrive in their classroom. Each day for breakfast, there is a grain, a protein, fruit options and milk that students can select from. As long as students are choosing one of the fruit options, and two or more other items, their breakfast will be free!

Lunch each day is a great opportunity for students to practice building balanced meals. Hot entrees are available for lunch daily at all schools, with at least two entree options available for students to choose from. Each lunch contains a variety of grains, proteins, fruits, vegetables and milk, which allows students the creativity to make their own meal choices. A rainbow of vegetables is offered throughout the week, which offers students a variety of important nutrients. Similar to the requirement for breakfast, students are required to select a serving of fruit or vegetable, along with at least two other food groups to receive their free lunch.



Q: Where can I find more information on school meal menus?

A: The School Breakfast and Lunch menus for all Minnetonka Schools are now available on Nutrislice. [Nutrislice is a website](#), and it is also available as a free app in the Apple Store and Google Play.



The menus on Nutrislice are organized by school site, and include information about the menu offerings for each day including nutrition facts, ingredients, the Top 9 allergens, and photos of the menu items. Students can also access the Nutrislice app on their school-issued iPad.

Q: Are there other foods available for my student to purchase during school?

A: In addition to the free school breakfast and lunch available to students each day, there are also a number of additional items students can purchase if there are funds in their meal account. For students bringing a meal from home, a carton of milk costs \$0.50.

All students have the option of purchasing a bottle of water in addition to their meal if their meal account has enough funds. For students in grades 3-12, they can purchase a second serving of the main entree during lunch using their meal account.

At the middle and high school levels, there are also a variety of A la Carte snack and beverage options available for students to purchase. All snacks and foods available for students during the school day follow Smart Snack guidelines, meaning they meet the nutritional criteria set by the USDA for nutritional snacks in school. When students purchase foods and beverages at school outside of the school meal programs, they are still getting products that fit within the nutritional guidelines of the USDA. This is to ensure that students are offered nutritious options throughout the school day, whether they are opting for the free school meal, or choosing A la Carte.

All purchases outside of the free school breakfast and free school lunch require there to be money in the student's meal account. Qualification for the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Program does not apply to any A la Carte purchases. We rely on parents and guardians to discuss their expectations for A la Carte purchases with their students, and to maintain a positive meal account balance.

Q: Does my student need a meal account number?

A: Our software system calls a meal account number a “keypad number.” Your student’s keypad number can be found by logging into your MySSO account, clicking on Skyward and locating the Food Service tab. Each student has their own keypad number. This number does not change each year so they essentially have it from Kindergarten to graduation!

Elementary students: Each student will receive a breakfast card and a lunch card with their keypad number in a barcode form on the card. These are provided to your student’s teacher. The breakfast card comes with a loop that will be attached to the top handle of your student’s backpack so they can grab breakfast on their way to the classroom each morning. At lunch, your student will be provided a barcode card on a lanyard that the cashier will scan as they checkout with their meal or a la carte purchases.

Q: How do I add money to my student’s meal account?

A: Online payments can be made to a student’s meal account using Skyward Family Access using your My SSO username and password. If you need support with your My SSO, please contact family.helpdesk@minnetonkaschools.org

Click on “Food Service” on the left hand menu. The “Make a Payment” button is located by your student’s account information in the middle of the screen.

You can add a pre-selected amount or customize how much you would like to add to your student’s meal account and proceed to check out through Vanco, our third party payment vendor. If you are a first time user to Vanco, you will need to recreate a username and password. Many users use the same username and password they use for MySSO.

Online payments are real-time payments, meaning as soon as you receive the confirmation email that you made a payment, the funds are available for your student.

Q: How can I monitor my student’s purchases?

A: You can view purchases in Skyward Family Access using your My SSO username and password. If you need support with your My SSO, please contact family.helpdesk@minnetonkaschools.org

Click on Food Service on the left hand menu. The purchases will appear on the right side of the screen.

Q: How can I transfer money between meal accounts or request a refund?

A: For families with multiple students, there is the option of transferring funds from one student's account to another. Simply [fill out this form](#), and your request will be processed within two weeks.

To request a meal account refund, [please fill out this form](#). Your request will be processed within two weeks.

Q: How will I know if my student's meal account balance is low?

A: You will receive a low balance email alert once the account balance reaches \$10.00 or below. This will be a daily alert until the account has been replenished.

Did you miss a previous month's edition? Check out all [past newsletters](#) on the Nutrition Services Department website.

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