

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“School meals and ala Carte snacks”



1. How is the school meal planned?

Much goes into planning your child’s school meal.

- a. As part of the National School Lunch (and Breakfast) Program, school menus must meet the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) menu pattern and nutritional requirements.
- b. Other influences include: The district’s documented Wellness Policy; Availability of USDA donated foods; Ethnic holidays and celebrations; Chartwells marketing and nutrition-based requirements, school-specific requests,
- c. The foodservice budget, which includes the cost of products and services; product availability, seasonal considerations, cost of the school meal,
- d. Facility design, including equipment and storage availability; Food safety requirements (federal, state, and local); Staffing,

2. What constitutes a “breakfast” and “lunch” meal?

The meal pattern established by the USDA is similar to the food groups from MyPyramid. A lunch meal must consist of at least “5 components”: meat or meat alternate, fruit, vegetable, bread and grains, and fluid milk. A breakfast meal must consist of at least “4 components”: meat or meat alternate and/or bread and grain, fruit or vegetable, and fluid milk.

“Offer Versus Serve” is an option established in 1975 mandating that students in high school would not be required to accept offered food that do not intend to consume. (This policy is optional at the lower grade levels.) For lunch, the student may decline up to “2 components.” For breakfast, the student may decline only “1 component.”

3. Is milk the only beverage allowed with the meal?

Yes. In accordance to the nutritional guidelines we must follow, fluid milk must be offered as part of the meal. The USDA option, *Offer versus Serve* allows the student to decline certain food items (as described in the previous question.)

Students who are lactose intolerant or have sensitivity to dairy products may have a physician-approved substitute, provided written (medical) documentation has been submitted to the school’s nurse.

4. Are junk foods, such as soda and candy, available to the students during the school day?

Foods designated by the USDA as *foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNV)* cannot be sold or given away as free promotional items during the meal period in areas where the school meals are served and eaten. *FMNV* fall into the following general categories: soda, water ice and popsicles, chewing gum, hard candy, jellies and gums, marshmallows, fondant, licorice, spun candy, and candy coated popcorn. (Certain states have legislated specific nutritional guidelines, which are more restrictive. At this time, Massachusetts guidelines are being developed based upon the most recent legislation.) These restrictions do not apply to any other areas on the school campus where food is sold.

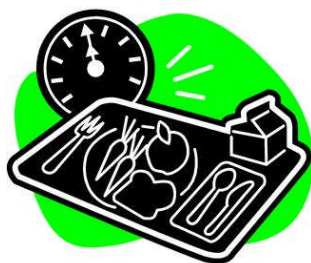
5. Are other foods sold during the school meal?

The USDA defines foods “sold in competition with the school meal program” as *competitive foods*. These foods might be sold as ala Carte menu items and snack foods and beverages. Examples of ala Carte and snack foods eligible for sale as competitive foods include, but are not limited to: sandwiches and other entrees, breakfast bars, cookies, desserts, chips and pretzels, fruit bars, bottled water, bottled juice and bottled milk. The option to have these items available to students is decided upon by the *Local School Food Authority* as described in the district’s Wellness Policy.

6. How do you handle students with food allergies or other dietary problems?

Parents with children with either a food-related disability or one that is not labeled as a disability should provide written documentation to the school nurse. Pertinent information will then be forwarded to the foodservice department. This will contain a physician’s signed statement, including: an explanation of the disability, food allergy and/or food intolerance; the food or foods to be avoided, and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted.

From this point, the parent and child should review the monthly menu and discuss possible meal selections. Contact the Director of Dining to discuss if any of the selections would be prohibited. Reasonable accommodations will be made so that your child receives a nutritious complete meal.



Purchasing a School Meal



1. Who determines the price of the school meal?

The price of the school meal is determined by the “local school food authority”, not the food service management company (Chartwells.)

2. What is the cost of the student meal?

Elementary Lunch:	\$2.50
Middle/High School Lunch:	\$2.75
Breakfast:	\$1.25
Adult Lunch:	\$3.25

3. Why is an adult meal charged at a higher price than the student meal?

Under the federal guidelines, breakfast and lunches served to adults must be priced so that the adult payment is sufficient to cover the overall cost of the meal without the subsidy. (Federal assistance is available as part of the program for children, not for adults.)

4. How does a student pay for his/her meal?

Parents of students are encouraged to pre-pay online using the designated system. (Example: [.CafePrePay.com](https://www.cafeprepay.com). Otherwise checks and cash are still accepted.

Checks should be made out to **Melrose Public Schools** with the student’s first and last name, ID number in the “reference” section. This will ensure that the funds are properly deposited. We highly recommend that deposits be made prior to lunchtime to limit lunch period delays serving our students.

5. What happens if a student forgets his/her meal money?

We are not in favor of seeing students going hungry for the day since we are aware of how this can affect their learning. If available, this department will adhere to the district’s meal policy. Otherwise “meal charging” will be limited and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There will be no charging for any ala carte sales (extra milk, sandwich, etc.) for the higher grades.

Low balance notes or letters will be sent out routinely. In cases where a child has a negative balance for a specified length of time, a phone call will be placed to the parent by food service. Be involved with your student and think ahead when planning on which days he or she will eat and forward the appropriate funds. This will be less stressful for them.

The school district realizes that unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Child Nutrition Program. As a self-sustaining program it does not automatically receive general fund support for routine operations, and thus must generate funds through student and adult meal sales, and federal/state reimbursement. Unpaid charges reduce revenue which may affect the ability to pay outstanding bills. Uncollected charges may result in higher meal prices for students.