



# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. How are the menus planned?

Menus are planned by a Registered Dietitian to provide students an opportunity to select nutritious foods that they will both enjoy eating as well as contribute to their good health. A wide variety of choices are offered in every school setting. Choices increase as students advance from elementary through middle school, to high school. Standardized recipes are utilized to ensure that all customers receive appetizing, high quality meals, and are prepared using food safety practices for preparing and serving food.

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

Carmel Clay Schools participate in the government National School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs and must meet the Federal meal pattern requirements set by the USDA. A basic meal compliant with these programs consists of the following:

### BREAKFAST

1 breakfast entrée  
1-2 servings of fruit or 100% juice  
1 Low-fat milk

### LUNCH

1 serving of meat/meat alternate  
1-2 servings of fruit  
1-2 servings of vegetables  
1 serving bread/grain  
1 Low-fat milk

Students have the option of declining components of a meal. For example, at lunch, a student may decline one or two components, but must take at least 3 total components. **At lunch, students must take a fruit and/or vegetable to make the meal reimbursable.** For breakfast, students may decline either the grain component or the milk, but must take the fruit/fruit juice component. Students must meet the minimum number of components in order to receive the reimbursable meal price.

## 3. Are school meals healthy?

Yes! Through the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program regulations, breakfast is designed to supply approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C. Lunch is designed to supply approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the same nutrients. The nutritional value of the meals is evaluated over a period of a week rather than calculated on a single meal or food item. USDA has daily and weekly minimums and maximums for fat, saturated fat, sodium and calories that are age appropriate for all students grades K-12. CCS has eliminated all fryers in the kitchens, and all foods served are steamed or oven baked to assure no additional fats are incorporated into the product. A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables are available daily in every school. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) reports that "children who eat school meals consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and dairy items than children who do not eat school meals."

## 4. How are portion sizes determined?

The USDA 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.



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## **5. What are government commodities, and are these high quality foods?**

Commodities are allocated by the USDA and ordered by schools depending upon availability. Commodities must meet high quality specifications, as do all CCS foods purchased. Commodities are offered at a reduced cost to school corporations. This allows the department to keep food costs down and, keep meal prices reasonable. Additional food items are purchased through recognized leaders in the food service industry in the form of a central Indiana food buying group.

## **6. How is the food service department funded?**

The school food service budget is a delicate balance between income and expenditures and is not-for-profit. The program is funded by breakfast and lunch payments, federal reimbursement dollars and commodity foods. These funds must stretch to cover food costs, repairs, replacement and purchase of equipment, salary and benefits, supplies, laundry, and training of staff. The food service program does not receive money from the general fund.

## **7. Why purchase a school meal?**

- a. Nutritious meals reflect the 2010 Dietary Guidelines
- b. Food is prepared and served in a food safe and sanitary environment
- c. Cost is less than bringing an equally nutritious meal from home
- d. Wide variety of healthy choices are available daily

## **8. How are meal payments made?**

The food service department uses a computerized meal payment program. Prepayment is encouraged at [www.EZSchoolPay.com](http://www.EZSchoolPay.com). Prepayments for meals may be made for any amount online (by credit/debit card) or through the Cafeteria Manager in each school (by check or cash). Prepayment is encouraged as this expedites the service to students through the serving line, allowing more time to eat. The online prepayment service is FREE for all families with no service fees. Elementary students are identified in the serving line by their name, teacher and school picture and secondary students use their student identification card.

## **9. Why is pricing different for adults and guest meals?**

The food service program receives varying amounts of reimbursement for each student meal it serves; however, no funds are received for adult/guest meals. As a result, an adult/guest is charged pricing which reflects the actual cost of the meal.

## **10. Can my child purchase extra items?**

The school meal program sells extra items such as milk, fruits, juices, extra entrees and a few additional healthier snack items to students. Money to cover the cost of the additional items must be in your child's account for them to purchase a la carte items at any grade level. If you do not want your child to purchase additional items, please let the Cafeteria Manager at your school know, and she/he can place a limit on your child's account.