


### Why Are School Meals No Longer Free This Year?



For the past two years, students could get school meals for free whether their parents filled out a meal application or not — unfortunately, that won't be the case this fall. The USDA made it possible for our school nutrition program to serve all students free breakfast and lunch through federal waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress did not extend these waivers for the upcoming school year, so this new school year we will be back to regularly priced meals.

Our school lunch program is a solely funded entity that only receives revenue from meals served. When parents and students choose to purchase a lunch from school, it is the equivalent of supporting a small business. If you're worried about paying for meals again, we encourage you to add one more item to your to-do list before school starts: **fill out an application for free and reduced-price lunch.**

#### Who needs to fill out the form and when does it need to be filled out?

If you feel you need help covering the cost of school meals, we encourage you to fill out a meal application, available from the school district. The form asks for information about your income and household size to determine if you qualify.

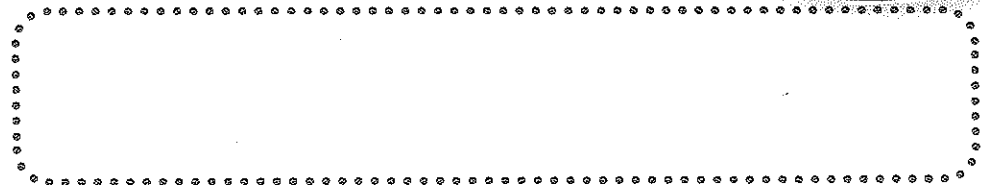
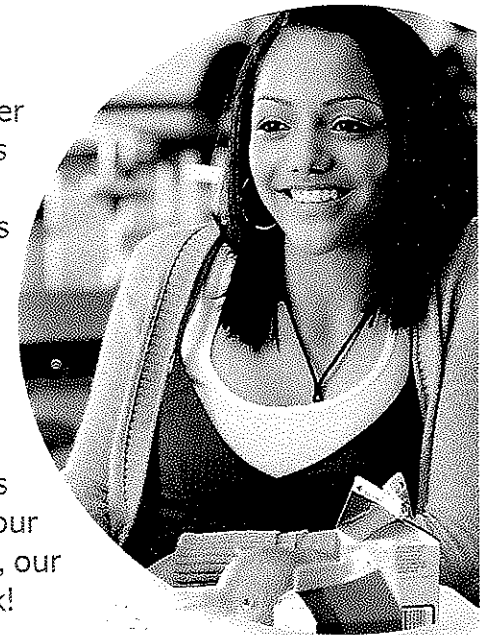
You can fill it out anytime during the school year, but the forms aren't retroactive. If you wait until October to fill it out, even if you are eligible for free lunch, you would still be charged for meals that your children take from the start of the school year, until whenever your form is approved. Even if you've filled out a form in the past, you need to reapply each school year.

#### Who sees the information I put on my form?

Your privacy is very important to the school district. We minimize the number of people involved in reading and processing the forms. While state auditors sometimes request to look at some of the forms to verify that we're processing the forms correctly, we keep these applications as confidential as possible.

#### If I don't qualify for free lunch, or my child doesn't eat school meals, why should I fill it out?

There are additional benefits to families and our school that are determined from the forms, like waivers and reduced fees for school sports and academic testing or reduced price for your home internet service. The forms are used to measure financial hardship in our community, which may allow our school to receive more resources for students. So do yourself, your children, our school, and our community a big favor and send in the application this week!



## Cafeteria Connection

Connecting you to your child's school lunchroom

### It's More Than a School Meal Application

Since the start of the pandemic, we have been proud to serve all students breakfast and lunch at no cost regardless of family income. While we are currently awaiting final guidance from the USDA, it is likely free meals will end prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year. With this uncertainty, we are asking for all families to submit a school meal application now to ensure all students have continued access to our nutritious meals.

The school meal applications are used for so much more than just certifying students for free or reduced-price school meals. Filling out an application can help you and our school by:



#### School Funding

May provide additional funding for state and federal programs and services at our school.



#### Athletics

May result in free or discounted fees to participate in activities.



#### Internet Access

May qualify your family for discounted rates on home internet service.



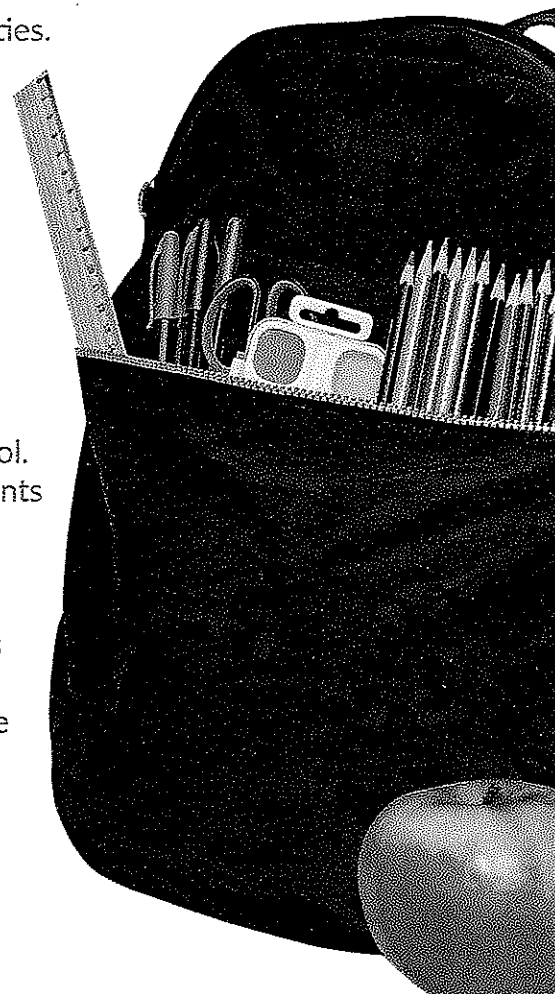
#### Academic Tests

May qualify you for reduced registration fees for AP, SAT, and/or ACT tests. May also qualify you for discounted rates associated with college admissions.

Every eligible form counts and adds valuable resources to our school. Submitting your school meal application helps ensure that all students and their families can access these key benefits.

It's easy! Completing an application takes less than 10 minutes and you only need to complete one application per family. Applications are completely confidential and will not be shared outside of the school district's office. No Social Security number is required. Since your family's financial situation may change from year to year, you must fill out a new application each school year.

Thank you for taking the time to submit your application.



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