

2023-2024 NUTRITION SERVICES

Breakfast/Lunch Program Information and Meal Purchasing Procedures

Welcome to the Columbia Public Schools' (CPS) Nutrition Services meal service! This document is meant to assist our families with understanding how the school district serves meals. Nutrition Services has a computerized cashiering system at all schools. All scholars enrolled in CPS are automatically assigned access to a scholar debit account to purchase and to pay for lunch, breakfast, and/or a la carte items. Money may be deposited into a scholar's account so that it is available each time a scholar eats and allows the scholar to move through the lines quickly. Scholars may choose to pay cash daily to our cashiers, however, scholars bringing cash to school is discouraged due to potential loss. Columbia Public Schools will not be responsible for any deposits or lost funds not given directly to the Nutrition Services Department whether cash or check. As a convenience, parents/guardians may view scholar purchases and deposit money online. Parents are welcome to eat with their children in the cafeteria (adult price \$2.70 for breakfast and \$4.95 for lunch)

Parental/Guardian account access to child(ren) meal information:

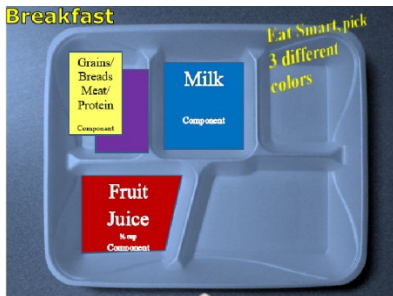
- Parents/guardians may review and/or pay for scholar purchases online via the **School Café Family Hub: family.schoolcafe.com/**. School Café Family Hub is also available as an app in **Google Play or Apple Store** (choose the **purple icon, not the green**). Using this app also allows parents/guardians to receive notification about low balances.
 - NOTE: family.schoolcafe.com/ will be disabled if a scholar is not actively enrolled in the current school year. Positive and negative balances in the account will remain.
 - Parents/guardians that wish to be considered for free or reduced-price meal benefits **must** complete a free and reduced-price meal application on the School Café Family Hub, family.schoolcafe.com/ or obtain a copy online at cpsk12.org/nutrition. Applying online provides families with quicker processing times. **Free and reduced-price meal applications are accepted all year long.**
- Items sold as a la carte have an extra cost. A la carte items are singular items that do not make up a complete meal (see price list on the nutrition website). Scholars must have a full meal to receive any meal benefits. Parents/guardians may pay for extra items by depositing money into their child's account.
- All schools use a computerized cashier system. Each scholar is automatically assigned a meal account. To access this account, all scholars enter their scholar ID on a keypad at the cash register for food purchases. This account rolls information from year to year and follows your child in the Columbia Public School district. There are 3 ways to pay on or to review this account:
 - In the school cafeteria to school lunch personnel only
 - Online via family.schoolcafe.com/ (can also track scholar purchases with this system). Families who would like to use this app must sign up for the school Café Family Hub App using Google Play or Apple Store and choose the purple icon, not the green
 - In the Nutrition Services office at 1818 W. Worley St., Columbia, MO 65203
 - When using a credit card, processing fees apply as follows:
 - The School Café fee is a flat fee of \$2.95 per transaction between \$0.01-500.
 - By phone or in person, the payment system is called School Pay and the fee is \$2.00 per every \$0.01-50.
 - These fees are not collected on the District's behalf, but are banking fees associated with the payment company the District uses.
- To receive low balance notices, families must create a school café account and choose an alert amount.

All scholars use their assigned personal identification number to access their meal account. This identification number will be typed into a keypad by the scholar at the cashier stand after obtaining a

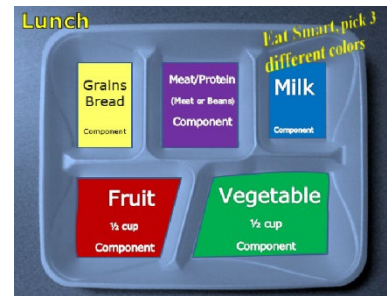
meal. Kindergarten scholars are encouraged to practice using their individual student identification number to move through the lunch lines efficiently.

All meals with a complete number of components are federally subsidized and therefore monitored for minimum amounts on a scholar’s tray by the cashier. The following is a list of components:

- **Scholars must select 3 components at each meal:** During breakfast, 4 items are offered covering 3 components and during lunch 5 components are offered. Scholars may have all 4 for breakfast and all 5 for lunch. A mandatory component is a fruit or a vegetable. Without one, a scholar will not pass inspection for completeness and may be charged higher a la carte prices per item or sent back to obtain a missing component.

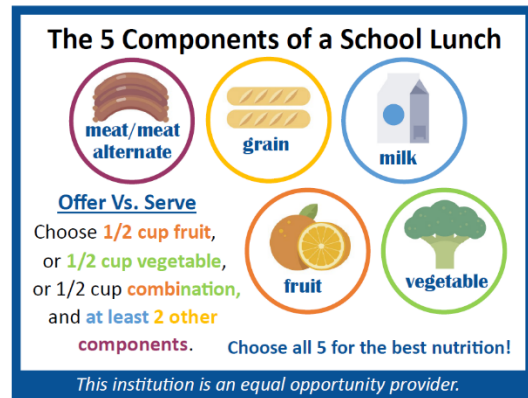
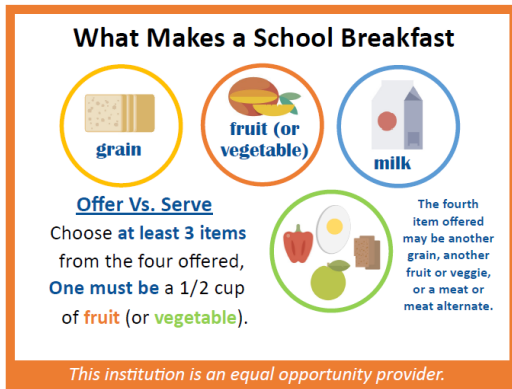


- **Grains**
- **Meat/Protein**
- **Fruit**
- **Vegetable**
- **Milk**



These posters are found in all cafeterias to assist scholars with selections.

We offer 4 items at breakfast and 5 components/items at lunch. Scholars may refuse one at breakfast and 2 at lunch and it is called Offer vs. Serve. See graphics below:



Free, Reduced-Price and Full-Price Meals

Annually all households by regulation will receive a free and reduced-price application to the address or e-mail listed on file in our Student Information System (SIS). Applications for meal benefits must be submitted every year to maintain meal benefits from July 1 through June 30. Income guidelines change every July 1st. Eligibility begins as of the date parents place on the application or within 60 days of a federal claim if date is beyond 2 months. Applications are accepted all year long.

In school year 2023-2024, all scholars without prior approval of free meal benefits, when selecting a meal without money in their account, will have the full-price meal charge added to their account. Households are responsible for all scholar charges incurred prior to free meal benefit approval.

All households who apply for benefits will be notified by e-mail whether approved or denied. Households that haven't received an e-mail and e-mail of their results are encouraged to call Nutrition Services at 573-214-3480. If a scholar is missing from the meal benefit notification, contact Nutrition Services immediately to have that scholar added to the application to avoid unnecessary meal charges. All accumulated charges are the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the scholar. Columbia Public Schools reserves the right to pursue payment of unpaid charges with a third-party collection agency. Please see the new *Scholar Charges and Delinquent Meal Accounts* section for details.

Meal Prices are updated July 1st of every year, please visit the Nutrition Services' website for updates cpsk12.org/nutrition

Scholar Charges and Delinquent Meal Accounts and Charge Procedures

A complete lunch must consist of at least 3 of the 5 components offered: Whole Grains, Meat/Protein Substitute, Fruit, Vegetable, and Milk. A complete breakfast consists of 3 of 4 items offered: Grain or Protein item (2 offered daily), fruit/vegetable, and milk. All scholars are required to take a fruit or vegetable at both lunch and breakfast or will be charged a la carte prices. A la carte purchases are prohibited if a scholar does not have money in his or her account or if the account balance is negative. Milk or juice-only purchases are considered an a la carte purchase. Courtesy automated phone calls will also go out to all households with **any** negative meal account balances weekly.

Scholars who go through the meal line to obtain a complete meal will not be denied a meal for any reason. There is no alternate meal for delinquent accounts. All scholars receive the same meal choices regardless of account balance.

Special Note: Secondary scholars (grades 6-12) will be informed of their account balances upon request and/or if they inquire about why they are unable to obtain extra meal items due to account deficits.

Important Information: Scholars will be allowed to charge meals, however after the equivalent of 5 lunches and breakfasts combined an *additional* automated message is generated to all households with a deficit account balance of negative \$25.00. Accounts with any deficit are considered delinquent. Immediate payment in full is required to avoid further action.

All delinquent accounts exceeding a negative \$50.00 will be turned over to a third-party debt recovery service and is considered bad debt. Once delinquent debt is turned over to a debt recovery service, interest fees and court fees associated with lawsuits may be charged if bad debt is not resolved in a timely manner. Columbia Public Schools has chosen a debt recovery service that is sensitive to our families' needs and will set up a payment plan if needed.

Once a delinquent account is turned over to a 3rd party collection service, payments must be directed to the 3rd party service to avoid account confusion. Any payments made to Columbia Public Schools after being turned over to the 3rd party collection service will be added to the scholar's account for future purchases and **will not** be applied to outstanding bad debt without explicit instructions with payment to do so.

All communications sent home are sent using the scholar information on file with the District. Please keep all scholar contact information up to date to receive important information. Failure to receive these notices does not negate parental/guardian responsibility for negative meal balances.

Meal Account Refunds:

All refunds must be requested. Refunds of \$10 or may be issued in person in the Nutrition Services office at 1818 West Worley Street, Columbia. Amounts over \$10.00 must be requested and will be mailed to the address on file for the parent/guardian. Refunds may take up to 4 weeks to process. Families who plan to leave the District at years end are encouraged to make plans for refunds that may include the address of their new residence or make an early request. Overseas payments will take significantly longer to receive. Refunds older than 3 years for unenrolled scholars will no longer be available for refund due to limited capacity to maintain scholar financial information for inactive scholars.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy that requires a food substitution in the cafeteria, a physician's order is required that includes foods to be eliminated and a list of acceptable substitutions. The scholar's physician must fill out and sign the Medical Statement for Students Requiring Meal Modifications form found on the CPS Nutrition Services' website cpsk12.org/nutrition or call 573-214-3480 to have a copy mailed or faxed to a physician. Due to large numbers of scholars, Nutrition Services' cashiers will be unable to monitor for scholar religious or lifestyle preferences that are not physician ordered. However, menus can be found on the Nutrition Services' website to assist families with meal selections daily.

All foods sold to scholars during the school day are under the scrutiny of USDA's National School Lunch Program Regulations which were created to promote high standards for all foods available to children. Columbia Public Schools strictly adheres to research-based nutrition regulations geared toward targeting nutrient deficits and excesses in the U.S. American diet.

For more information regarding school meals, please contact the Nutrition Services office at (573) 214-3480 or log on to the Nutrition Services' website: cpsk12.org/nutrition.