

Child Nutrition Department FAQs

How are your menus determined?

Our program is led by two Registered Dietitians who have a passion for serving healthy, delicious meals to students. School meals are healthy meals that are required to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To receive federal reimbursements, school meal programs must offer “reimbursable” meals that meet strict federal nutrition standards. These standards, also referred to as “the meal pattern,” require schools to offer students the right balance of fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free milk, whole grains and lean protein with every meal.

What is a reimbursable meal?

A single priced meal that offers all of the USDA daily required meal pattern items for breakfast and components at lunch for each age/grade group served in the minimum required amounts is referred to as a “reimbursable meal.”

Quantities vary by age/grade group, but items remain constant and necessary for all student meals claimed for reimbursement. A reimbursable **breakfast** meal offers **4 items**:

- Meat/Meat Alternative
- Grain
- Fruit
- Milk

Students must select at least 3 items with one of them being a fruit for a reimbursable breakfast meal. It’s important to note that some foods may equal 2 items (i.e. “Pancake on a Stick” contains meat and grains; therefore, it counts as 2 items).

A reimbursable **lunch** meal offers **5 components**:

- Meat/Meat Alternative
- Grain
- Vegetable
- Fruit
- Milk

Under a provision called Offer Vs. Serve, students only need to take 3 out of the 5 components being offered at lunch to count as a reimbursable meal (with at least one of those 3 components being a fruit OR vegetable serving). The meal is the same price if they select 3, 4, or 5 components.

What happens if my student does not want to pick up the minimum required meal components for a USDA reimbursable meal?

Student meals that do not meet the USDA requirements are not reimbursable as Free, Reduced-price or Student Paid price. Students are encouraged to select a complete reimbursable meal, but if they refuse to select the 3 minimum components with at least one being a fruit or vegetable, the

individual items on the plate must be charged as an a la carte purchase. The a la carte prices are higher than regular student meal prices because they are not subsidized by the USDA.

Why do staff, adults, and visitors pay more for a tray than the students?

Federal guidelines state that the adult meal must be priced so that it is sufficient enough to cover the cost of the meal. This is to include all USDA entitlements and bonus commodities used to prepare the meal. All students, even Full Paid status students, receive federal reimbursement and commodities to subsidize the cost of their meals so that their meals cost less than staff, adults, or visitors.

My child has a food allergy but wants to eat breakfast and lunch at school. What can I do to ensure that allergens are being monitored?

Perry Township's Child Nutrition Department encourages all students to participate in our programs—even if they have specific allergies. Our staff dietitians are trained in creating menus that meet your child's personal nutritional needs due to allergies.

It is important to note that Perry Township Schools follows the USDA guidelines for meal planning, meeting and exceeding all nutritional requirements. Federal law and the regulations for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program require schools to make reasonable accommodations for children who are unable to eat the school meal as prepared because of a *disability*. According to the ADA, the term 'disability' is defined as 1.) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual 2) a record of such an impairment; or 3) being regarded as having such an impairment. We will gladly accommodate students who meet these criteria!

In order to make modifications or substitutions to the school meal, schools must have a written Medical Statement signed by a recognized medical authority identifying the following:

- An identification of the medical or other special dietary condition which restricts the child's diet
- The food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet
- The food or choice of foods to be substituted. In Indiana, a recognized medical authority includes a physician, physician assistant, and nurse practitioner

To ensure that specialized menus for defined disabilities are implemented in a timely manner, we ask that you please contact our Assistant Director, Callie Neumann, to discuss your child's individual needs as soon as possible at 317-789-3748. Once documentation has been received, your child's allergens will be flagged in Skyward to alert our staff of foods that must be avoided.

Our family refrains from consuming certain foods due to religious preferences. Can specialized menus be created for my student?

Sustaining from consuming a particular food due to religious or personal preferences (i.e. "no pork") does not meet the ADA definition of medical disability; therefore, the school food

authority is not required to make substitutions or menu accommodations. While Perry Township Schools do not make special menus for such preferences, we do offer meal flexibility through Offer vs. Serve. Under this provision, students are offered all 5 components of the school lunch pattern (meat/meat alternative, grain, vegetable, fruit, and milk) and they may select 3 to 5 of these components for it to qualify as a meal, with at least one those components being a fruit or vegetable. This provision allows students to decline certain foods due to such preferences while still counting as a reimbursable meal.

In addition, we are pleased to offer a variety of foods and multiple entrée choices that allow students to continue participating in our school food service programs that provide nutritious meals on a daily basis. Vegetarian entrées offered include PB&J sandwiches, salads, and select entrées at various locations. Some salads do contain meat; however, the meat can be eliminated on the salad with advanced notice to allow the Child Nutrition Staff time to prepare accordingly.

The Child Nutrition Department can also flag a student's account with instructions, such as "no pork," as requested for religious reasons. The cashier will make every effort to check that student's tray to verify that it meets the restrictions. Lastly, all students are allowed to bring food from home to accommodate personal or religious food preferences.

How does the application process work? What about meals charged while my application is being reviewed?

Until the Free / Reduced applications are approved parents / guardians are responsible for any charges that are incurred during the application review process. The amount of time that is allowed to approve or deny an application varies from 1-10 working days depending on the time of year. You can view Perry Township's Charge Policy here (insert link to Charge Policy document).

How do I add money to my child's school meal account?

Perry Township Schools utilizes "eFunds for Schools" for online payments for student meal accounts. You can access eFunds by clicking here (insert link→ <http://www.perryschools.org/pre-payment-options/>).

You are also welcome to send money in the form of cash or check with your student or in person to the Child Nutrition Department located at 6548 Orinoco Avenue.

If you chose to submit a payment in the form of a check with your student, please place it in an envelope marked clearly with your student's name, their ID #, their teacher's name, the \$ amount and the check #. Turn in prepaid deposits to the cafeteria cashier(s) or school office.

If you choose to bring money to school personally or send it with your student, please put it in an envelope clearly marked with the student's first and last name, their ID #, their teacher's name, and the amount enclosed.