



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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TO: Dr. Ushma Shah, Superintendent
Board of Education

FROM: Patrick King, Senior Director of Finance

SUBJECT: Food Service and Registration Fees Update

DATE: March 14, 2023

At the February 21, 2023 board meeting there were some additional questions and clarification requested surrounding food service and the components of the registration fee. I put together a brief FAQ response below to help address the questions:

Which Schools Serve Breakfast?

All 10 schools offer breakfast 30-45 minutes before the first bell rings. Principals send out various communications throughout the year on breakfast times and where to go. Typically, these communications happen during their welcome back to school nights, weekly newsletters, etc. Individual school PTO's also communicate out breakfast information as well. The front office staff at each building direct the children to the cafeteria should they inquire about breakfast as well. Menus, food prices, and free breakfast/lunch applications, are all available on the school websites as well. Information and opportunities to apply for free lunch are also communicated during the registration process as well. Administration will continue to work with principals to ensure they are regularly communicating this.

School Buses typically arrive close to the morning bell in the morning. Are those students able to receive breakfast if they want and how are the students and their parents informed on that?

Yes, all students arriving to school via bus in the morning are given the opportunity to have breakfast if they want it. The processes may vary slightly, as the number of buses arriving in the morning ranges from none up to eight buses depending on the school. Students coming off the buses in the morning are directed by building staff to go to the cafeteria if they want breakfast. Principals send out various communications throughout the year on breakfast times and where to go. Typically, these communications happen during their welcome back to school nights, weekly newsletters, etc. Administration will work with the principals to ensure they are making it clear to both students and parents that students arriving on the bus should go to directly to the cafeteria or to the front office staff if they want breakfast in the morning.

What does the instructional materials portion of the registration fee cover? Are there specific examples?

As is standard practice in school districts throughout Illinois, school fees are general fees to help cover costs for instructional materials, before/after school and lunch supervision, and technology. The portion of the fee for instructional materials is meant to provide additional materials for students to enhance instructional activities, beyond the traditional textbook lesson. Instructional materials used can vary depending on teachers, grades, programs, etc. Below are some examples of instructional materials covered by the fees:

- Access to digital texts
- Access to printed materials
- Access to course content and learning management systems
- Access to common assessments

What options do families experience an economic hardship have regarding school fees and how is that communicated?

Families that are not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch but cannot pay school fees due to special circumstances may apply for a payment plan or fee waiver by contacting their student's principal. This is communicated in a summer mailing to all families over the summer, is noted on the D97 website under the school fee section, and there is a specific question asking families if they wish to be considered for an economic hardship during the registration process. D97 follows up with families who did not pay their fees by the Sept 30th deadline each school year and is exploring ways to communicate the hardship policy during that process.

How are we supporting families for whom annual school supply expenses are burdensome?

School supply lists are posted on the individual school websites and typically communicated out to families from their classroom teacher, principal, or building administrative staff. Individual school PTOs also communicate out school supply lists and help assist families in need to purchase supplies. D97 does have a large supply of backpacks that were donated from Costco in the Spring of 2022. The backpacks are proactively given to families experiencing homelessness, but could also be utilized by other families in need as well. There are also annual school supply drives conducted by the Oak Park and River Forest Townships and other various not-for-profit organizations in the area. D97 will explore ways to better partner with these organizations so our families in need are made aware of them.