



August 11, 2023

Dear Parent or Guardian,

On July 20, 2023 Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the bipartisan education budget for fiscal year 2024 that ensures all Pre-K-12 public school students receive free reimbursable breakfast and lunch. The Food Services Department of Okemos Public Schools is delighted to participate in the Michigan School Meals Program and to serve each and every student a well-balanced breakfast and lunch, free of charge. I wanted to go into further detail about exactly what that means for your students..

A *reimbursable meal* is one that satisfies the nutritional components determined by the USDA. Quantities vary by age/grade group, but components remain constant and necessary for all student meals claimed for reimbursement. For your student to receive a free meal, the items they select **MUST** satisfy the nutritional requirements.

The **BREAKFAST** meal pattern consists of 3 food components:

- 1) Fruit/Vegetable
- 2) Grains (Meat/Meat Alternates may be substituted when minimum daily grain is met)
- 3) Fluid Milk (1% or fat-free white or fat-free flavored)

For **BREAKFAST**, the student must select at least 3 components, one of which **MUST** be a fruit, vegetable, or juice. For example, if your child only selects a cereal bowl and a milk, this breakfast is not reimbursable because it is missing fruit or juice. In this case, your child's account would be charged the cost of the cereal bowl and the milk because their selections do not satisfy all of the nutritional requirements. If your child adds a fruit cup or juicebox, the breakfast is now reimbursable, and your child's account would not be charged. Milk alone is not a reimbursable meal and is not free, it has to be charged as ala carte if a full meal is not taken.

The **LUNCH** meal pattern consists of 5 food components:

- 1) Fruits
- 2) Vegetables
- 3) Grains
- 4) Meats/Meat Alternates
- 5) Fluid Milk (1% or fat-free white or fat-free flavored)

For **LUNCH**, the student must select at least 3 different and up to 5 components, one of which **MUST** be a fruit or vegetable. For example, if your child selects pizza and milk, this lunch is not reimbursable because it is missing a fruit and/or vegetable. In this case, your child's account would be charged the cost of the pizza and milk because their selections do not satisfy all of the

nutritional requirements. If your child adds a salad and/or grapes, the lunch is now reimbursable, and your child's account would not be charged. Milk alone is not a reimbursable meal and is not free, it has to be charged as ala carte if a full meal is not taken.

Our dedicated staff will direct your student to add any missing component(s) if they come to the register with a meal that is not reimbursable. However, if a child refuses to take the needed component or walks away without it, we are forced to charge meal accounts for the individual items. We encourage you to discuss this with your students so that they have an easier time making their lunch selections. Please check out the Okemos Food Service website for more information on reimbursable meals, nutritional components, menus and other topics related to Food Services at [okemosk12.net](http://okemosk12.net) and under "Departments" select "Food Service".

While breakfast and lunch will be free this school year, we will also still be offering a la carte options for students to purchase. Items like chips, beverages, cookies, and other items are not covered and students will need to have funds in their account or cash in hand to purchase them. Negative meal account balances are not allowed under Michigan School Meals Program so we encourage all parents to maintain a small balance in their student's account just in case.

Currently, the Michigan Department of Education is in the process of updating the free and reduced meals applications. While every student automatically receives free reimbursable breakfast and lunch this school year, all families who believe they might qualify are encouraged to fill out this application, as it may connect you to other school resources that your family may be eligible for. We will have it available on our website once it's published. In the meantime, you can complete the Free and Reduced application.

Additionally, if your student requires meal substitutes due to a disability, such as food allergies, you must complete a special diet statement form. This form is different from those filled out for the purposes of a 504 plan or other documentation through the nurses office and applies only to food service. If you have previously had a special diet statement on file with the food service department, we ask that you please review it and submit a new one for this year if anything has changed. The special diet statement form is available on our website or by contacting the Food Services office.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact the Food Services office at 517-706-5017 or [foodservice@okemosk12.net](mailto:foodservice@okemosk12.net).

Sincerely,

Emily Swirsky  
Director of Nutrition and Food Services

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