

# NEW PRAIRIE UNITED SCHOOL CORPORATION

## NUTRITIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

It is the mission of the New Prairie United School Corporation's (NPUSC) Nutrition Department to offer healthy choices and quality food at reasonable prices, while keeping excellent customer service. School menus are planned to provide students an opportunity to select nutritious food that they will enjoy eating and contribute to good health. NPUSC participates in the National School Breakfast Program, the National School Lunch Program. Both of these programs must meet requirements from USDA based on the Dietary Guidelines for key nutrients and calories for growing children.

### How are the menus planned?

*Menus are planned to provide students an opportunity to select nutritious foods that they will both enjoy eating as well as contribute to their good health. A wide variety of choices are offered in every school setting. Choices increase as students advance from elementary through middle school, to high school. Standardized recipes are utilized to ensure that all customers receive appetizing, high quality meals, and are prepared using food safety practices for preparing and serving food.*

### Where can I find the menu for my student's school?

*All menus can be accessed at [www.npusc.k12.in.us](http://www.npusc.k12.in.us), under the Programs/Services tab, and Nutrition Services Home Page. Coming in the 2017-18 School Year, there will be an interactive mobile app available to view the menus, and will include nutritional information on each of the meals we serve.*

### How does the Nutritional Services Department assure safe meals are served to the students?

*Serving safe food is a critical responsibility for any school food service department and is a key aspect of a healthy school environment. Before working in any of our cafeterias, potential employees are required to take a new hire sanitation class with successful completion of a quiz used to confirm understanding of training topics. The food service department adheres to a food safety program based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. HACCP is a systematic approach designed to reduce the risk of foodborne hazards by focusing on each step of the food preparation process from receiving to storage. Standard Operating Procedures (or SOP's) are used to make this approach successful. In addition, cafeteria managers and leads are Serve Safe Certified and all employees are Food Handler Certified. This certification is nationally recognized and accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).*

### What are government commodity foods, and are these items of good quality?

*Commodities are food items that are allocated by the USDA and ordered by schools depending upon availability. Commodities must meet high quality specifications as do all of our food purchases. Commodities are offered at a reduced cost. This allows the department to keep food costs down and, therefore, keep meal prices reasonable. Commodities are allocated by the State and sent to select manufacturers for processing. NPUSC uses such recognizable companies as Tyson, Pilgrim's Pride, Land O' Lakes and Jennie-O. Additional food items are purchased through recognized leaders in the food service industry.*

### How are portion sizes determined?

*The government regulates the minimum serving sizes of the basic combo meal. Serving sizes are adjusted to meet the nutritional needs of students according to age and calorie limits. Serving sizes remain the same daily due to USDA regulations. Meal prices are calculated based on the guidelines set forth by the USDA.*

### **How is the Nutritional Services Department funded?**

*The school food service budget is a delicate balance between income and expenditures. The program is funded by breakfast and lunch monies and federal reimbursement. These funds must s-t-r-e-t-c-h to cover ever escalating food costs, repairs, replacement and purchase of equipment, salary and benefits, supplies, laundry, and training of staff. The food service program does not receive money from the general budget.*

### **What qualifies as a reimbursable (Free, Reduced or Paid price) meal?**

*NPUSC meals must meet certain meal patterns to qualify as reimbursable meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. A lunch consists of five components: meat/meat alternate, grain, fruit, vegetable and milk. Students can take all 5 components, or decline up to two. At least one half cup of fruit or vegetable must be taken. A breakfast consists of four components: two grains or a grain and protein, as well as a fruit and milk. Students may elect to decline one of these components at breakfast.*

### **How do I know which items are parts of a reimbursable meal, and which items are sold a la carte?**

*At all schools there are items that are sold as ala carte that do not count as part of the reimbursable meal. Examples of items that are always a la carte include water (juice at grade 7 through 12), baked chips/pretzels, Low Sugar and Low Fat Ice Cream, and more. If you do not want your elementary student to purchase a la carte items, please contact your school manager directly.*

### **Will the other students know if my child receives free or reduced price meals?**

*No, your child will purchase meals just as any other student. There is nothing on the cashiers' screens that shows that your student receives free or reduced price meals.*

### **How can I find out my student's meal account balance?**

*The food service department uses a computerized meal payment program. Students are issued a personal meal account using their student ID number. Elementary students are identified in the serving line by their name, teacher and school photo. Middle and High School students enter their student ID number into a keypad, which brings up their account (including their school photo) during checkout.*

*There are three forms of payment accepted, credit cards, cash and check. Prepayment is encouraged as this expedites the service to the student through the serving line, allowing more time to eat, and reduces the need for daily cash handling. All students can use MySchoolBucks, a pre-paid meal payment system at <http://www.myschoolbucks.com>, to load funds with a credit or debit card. For new accounts, make sure to have your student's ID number available when signing up for access and be aware that there is a service fee of \$2.00 per transaction. Once an account is established, meal and purchase history can be viewed and account controls can be set to send reminders of low balances and automatically add funds. Payments made online are imported to our computer systems every 15 minutes. Envelopes will be provided to elementary students on Friday for money to be sent in on Monday. Envelopes should be filled out completely with student's name, grade, teacher and amount enclosed. Checks should be made payable to "(School Name) Cafeteria" and should include student name in the memo line. If using one check for multiple accounts, please label with specific instructions.*

*Account balance information may be accessed by using MySchoolBucks.com, powerschool.com, or by contacting your student's cafeteria manager directly. Students will be notified of low balances at the point of sale and notices will be sent via student, email and by a phone call. At the end of each school year, funds remaining in the account will be applied to the upcoming year. Refunds will only be available to students graduating or leaving the district.*



### **What if my student runs out of money in their account?**

*Elementary students are allowed to charge the cost of 3 lunches. Students reaching the charge limit will be given a peanut butter sandwich and milk (for a limited time). Extra items may not be charged. Charge notices will be sent home with your child along with an automated telephone call for those students reaching the charge limit.*

*Middle and High School students may charge one breakfast OR lunch, and ala carte items may NOT be charged. If charging is abused or not paid in a timely manner, the student will no longer be allowed to charge. A supplemental meal of a cheese sandwich and milk will be offered (for a limited time) to those students with a negative lunch account balance.*

### **Why is pricing different for adults and guest meals?**

*The food service program receives varying amounts of reimbursement for each student meal it serves; however, no funds are received for adult meals. As a result, an adult is charged a la carte pricing which reflects the actual cost of the meal.*

### **Why can't all students eat for free?**

*Only schools with over 40% of students directly certified through state assistance are eligible to serve all students free meals per the USDA NSLP by participating in the CEP (Community Eligibility Program). Schools that do not qualify can only serve free meals to all students if that cost is paid for with "non-program" money. The food service program is allowed to provide free or reduced meals to only those students who qualify for the program.*

**If you have additional questions, please contact Mike Hale, Food Service Director, at 574-654-0401 or [mikehale@npsc.k12.in.us](mailto:mikehale@npsc.k12.in.us).**

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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