

FREE AND REDUCED-MEAL PRICES/MEAL CHARGE Administrative Guidelines

All Fitzgerald Public School students will receive breakfast and lunch at no charge because the district qualifies for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). (If the District does not receive CEP funding for a particular school year, free and reduced price meals shall be provided to students in accordance with this Policy, as set forth below.)

Amended: September 2019

Students may charge meals in accordance with the following rules:

1. Students are expected to pay for meals at the school's published meal rate each day. Families are expected to maintain funds in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day.
2. Students may charge complete reimbursable meals only.
3. All students will be provided with meal charge opportunities pursuant to this guideline, regardless of whether they receive full price, reduced price, or free meals.
4. When the balance on a student's meal card or account is exhausted, the District will provide the student with the student's meal of choice of the available reimbursable meal choices for that school day, if the student requests one, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to withhold a meal.
5. No student with a negative meal card or account balance will be allowed to purchase any a la carte items, including snacks, extras, or drinks other than milk.
6. The information provided at the beginning of each school year shall include an explanation of the District's Policy on charging meals, and shall provide each parent or guardian with a procedure for notifying the District that their student should not be allowed to charge meals.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE/REDUCED MEALS:

To extend the benefit of the program to all eligible students, the District will communicate to families the eligibility for free and reduced meals, the procedures for applying and the district's policies and procedures regarding meal charges set forth in this Policy.

1. At the beginning of each year, information letters shall be sent to households of children attending the school to inform families about the Child Nutrition Programs and that free or reduced price meals or free milk may be available to children, and the procedures for applying for enrollment in the program.
2. The letters may be distributed by regular mail, e-mail addressed to the parent or guardian, or included in information packets provided to students.
3. The information provided to each family at the beginning of each school year shall include a printed application for enrollment in the federal free and reduced price lunch program, or instructions on how to file an electronic application and instructions on how to obtain a paper application at no cost.
4. The information provided at the beginning of each school year shall identify the District's Food Service Director, provide that person's contact information, and inform families that they may contact that person to request assistance in applying for federal free and reduced price lunch benefits.
5. When a student owes money for at least five meals, the District will take the following steps to explore the student's eligibility for federal free and reduced price lunch benefits:
 - a. make all reasonable attempts to determine if the student is directly certified as eligible for free meals;
 - b. make at least two attempts (in addition to the packet sent home at the beginning of the year) to reach the student's parent or guardian;
 - c. encourage the parent or guardian to complete the application for federal free and reduced price lunch benefits, and offer assistance in completing that application;
 - d. determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the student to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal; and
 - e. offer any other assistance that is appropriate.

6. If the District becomes aware that a student whose parent or guardian has not submitted an application for free or reduced price lunch or milk benefits is eligible for those benefits, the Food Service Director shall complete and file an application on behalf of the student, in accordance with the procedures set forth in 7 C.F.R. 245.6(d).

A household may apply for benefits at any time during the school year:

1. Only one application is required for all children in the household.
2. No application is necessary if the household was notified by the District that all children have been directly certified. If the household is not sure if their children have been directly certified, they should contact Food Service Director.
3. A student's status as eligible for free and reduced price meals shall carry over into the next school year for thirty (30) days from the start of school attendance.
4. All applications for free/reduced meals must be processed within 10 days of receipt. Families are responsible for all meal charges during this processing period.
5. A student that transfers from a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 (P2) participating school to a non-participating school shall be deemed eligible for free and reduced price meal benefits for thirty (30) days or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever occurs first.