

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We hope you are had an enjoyable summer. In preparation for the new school year, we wanted to send you some reminders about the school lunch program.

Lunch is offered for purchase each day that a lunch period takes place at school. Students always have a choice of bringing a lunch from home or purchasing either a school lunch or making an a la carte purchase.

To constitute a school lunch, students must be offered the following five components to meet program requirements: (1) Meat or Meat alternate, (2) Vegetable, (3) Fruit, (4) Grains & Breads, and (5) Milk. Students **MUST** select a minimum of a grain, a fruit or vegetable, and one other component.

Students receiving free or reduced lunch are entitled to a school lunch as part of that program. Any a la carte purchases require that funds be provided.

Student Accounts

- Elementary Schools-Students have two options: 1.) Deposit money in EZ lunch account. 2.) Send a lunch from home. **NO CASH** is accepted in our Elementary program. To participate in the lunch program you must open an EZ Lunch Account.
- Middle & High Schools- Students have three options: 1.) Deposit money in EZ lunch account 2.) Send cash to school daily 3.) Send a lunch from home.
- Each student is assigned a protected PIN#.
- Students do not have to buy lunch daily only when they want to.
- Parents can limit purchases to "Lunch Only". (no a la carte purchases)
- Computerized cash registers deduct the cost of purchases from the student's account.
- Elementary parents will receive a low balance alert envelope or phone call or email when the account needs to be replenished.
- Refunds can be requested if the student graduates or withdraws from district.

To put money in the EZ Lunch Account, you have several Payment Options:

1. Send a check (Check made out to: SOMBOE) with the student to school to submit to their teacher. Mark the envelope "Lunch Program" and include your child's name and teacher. (Do Not Send Cash)
2. By mail: Columbia High School, Food Services, 17 Parker Avenue, Maplewood, NJ 07040
3. In Person: Columbia High School, Food Services Office, 17 Parker Avenue, Maplewood
4. Using credit or debit card (fee for service) @ www.mealpayplus.cm or call toll free (877)237-0946.

Parents are responsible for maintaining a positive balance in their student's lunch account. **Charges are not permitted.** Parents must send a lunch from home when there is no money on account.

Two types of accounts are available to parents to determine spending guidelines – the General Account and the Lunch Only Account. Money can be designated for either or both accounts. By putting money into both accounts, parents can ensure their children buy a School Lunch and at the same time control the amount available for snacks.

What is a "General Account"?

If you want flexibility, placing money in the General Account allows the student to buy any item offered in the school cafeteria. Funds can be used to purchase a School Lunch and/or additional items such as a

second milk, an extra slice pizza, nutritious snacks or juice items. Students eligible for free or reduced lunch may deposit money into the General Account to purchase items in addition to their eligible lunch.

What is the “Lunch Only Account”?

This account is intended for parents who want to limit their student’s purchases to meals only. No snacks or additional items (second slice pizza) etc., may be purchased from this account.

How do I know when my child needs more funds in their account?

South Orange Maplewood School District uses the automatic School Messenger notification system to send negative balance notifications to parents. This allows the district to not only make the process more efficient, but by going “Green” the district saves money that can better be used in other areas. Parents receive a weekly call to the primary phone number and an email to the address listed in PowerSchool. This only affects Elementary grades. The current policies and procedures do not allow students grades 6-12 to charge or acquire negative balances, and therefore, those students will not receive notifications.

You may check balances at any time by going to www.mealpayplus.com or by calling the Food Service Office at 973-762-5600 ext. 1002 (Monday-Friday, 9am-3pm) and speak to Coleen Thaler, Accounting Department for assistance with Student Id’s for the mealpayplus program and for account balances.

Negative Balances

Negative balances will be carried over to the following school year. These negative balances must be taken care of prior to the start of the new school year. Parents with accounts in arrears must send a lunch from home until negative balances have been taken care of or a payment schedule arranged and adhered to. **If you do not send a lunch from home the student will be sent to the office, which you will receive a call from school to bring a lunch for your child.**

Free/Reduced Lunch Applications

Free and reduced meals are available to those families that qualify. Free and reduced lunch applications will be sent home with other forms at the start of school. A copy of the application is attached to this email for your convenience. You can also apply online for free or reduced meals through the district website (<http://www.somds.k12.nj.us>) under the department directory for food services or you can fill out the form at the business office at the Administration Building, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood.

Monthly Menus

Monthly menus are posted on the district website at <http://www.somds.k12.nj.us> under the department directory for food services. A copy of the September menu is included with this notification.

Who should I contact if my child has a food allergy?

Please inform the Food Service office of any known allergies or dietary restrictions. A medical note must be provided by your physician; this may be faxed to our office at 973-763-5774. Restrictions and allergies are posted in our computerized system for food service staff access. Please confirm receipt of the notification at 973-762-5600 ext 1002.