



Important Information on Free School Meals

Dear Irvington School Community,

We're pleased to announce that beginning this 2025-26 school year, Irvington UFSD will participate in the New York State Child Nutrition Universal Free Meals Program. Through this initiative, all students will receive one breakfast (where breakfast is available) and one lunch meal daily at no cost, regardless of household income. The program offers a variety of healthy and nutritious meals. Children can choose from a wide range of options, including vegetarian and vegan meals. All meals offered to students follow USDA Guidelines for milk, fruits, vegetables, proteins and grains. A la carte items such as specialty beverages and snacks will still be available for purchase.

How it will work:

- Irvington UFSD will provide all students with one complete breakfast meal (Middle School/High School campus only) and one lunch meal daily at no cost to families. No action is required from parents or guardians for students to receive free meals. Students will need to use their student number to obtain the meal. Students are allowed to charge only one breakfast and one lunch meal per day
- Ala carte items, such as snacks, specialty drinks and any second meals will require funds on the student's MySchoolBucks account or cash at the register. We do not allow these items to be charged to an account without a positive balance. Please visit MySchoolBucks via the following link to access your child's account: <https://www.myschoolbucks.com/>
- The District submits reimbursement claims to the State and Federal government to support this program. As such, eligibility verification for free or reduced-price meals continues to be required.

What we need from parents:

- To streamline reimbursements and enhance our ability to provide the greatest benefit to your children, we kindly ask that families continue to complete and submit the Education Benefit Form ([Household Income Form](#)) if you have been eligible in the past or expect you would be eligible.
 - This form enables the school district to qualify for Federal and State grants that help fund additional instructional programs.
 - Eligible families may also benefit from waivers for college application fees, standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT, and discounted school-related expenses. This form also assists the District in identifying students who may be eligible for the PTSA Bulldog Family Fund or other programs.
 - All application information is completely confidential and no school office staff receive this information, with the exception of the social worker.
 - Parents should continue to fund the MySchoolBucks account for their student if the parents allow purchases for ala carte or snack items. Only the first meal will be free.
- If there is a negative account balance from a prior year, it will need to be settled in My School Bucks to a positive balance in order for your child to charge a la carte items.
- Parents should review with their child what constitutes a complete meal (see FAQ below). The National School Lunch program is heavily audited and cashiers are not permitted to ring up a meal as a complete meal (charging the government) if it does not meet the meal requirements of the NSL program.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a complete meal?

A complete breakfast consists of 4 items to choose from:

- Whole Grains: 2-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)
- Protein: 1-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)
- Fruit: 4-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1 or 2)
- Milk: 8-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)

Note: Students must choose at least three of the four items offered with one of those being a fruit as an incomplete meal will be charged at à la carte prices. All four items may be taken.

A complete lunch consists of 5 components:

- Whole grains: 2-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)
- Protein: 2-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)
- Vegetable: 4-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1 or 2)
- Fruit: 4-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1 or 2)
- Milk: 8-ounce equivalent serving (choose 1)

Note: Students must choose at least three of the five components offered with one of those being a vegetable or fruit as an incomplete meal will be charged at à la carte prices. All five components may be taken if desired.

Q. Does this mean all food at the schools are free?

No. While the first **complete** breakfast and lunch each day are provided at no cost to students, any additional meals or meal components will be charged at a la carte prices. Snacks and specialty drinks are also not included and will be charged accordingly. Meals are only free for students. Adults will continue to pay the posted rates.

Q. What benefits are there of the Child Nutrition Universal Free Meal program?

1. Improved health:

Children who receive nutritious meals are more likely to maintain good health, and thrive academically and socially. Healthy eating supports their ability to learn, play, and reach their full potential.

2. Reduced hunger:

The program ensures that all children have consistent access to wholesome meals, helping to alleviate food insecurity and promote well-being.

3. Reduced costs:

By providing free meals, the program helps reduce the financial burden on families, easing the cost of daily nutrition for children.

Q. Do I have to do anything for my child to receive no-cost meals?

No action is required from parents to participate in this program as students automatically receive the Universal Meal benefits. However, the District kindly encourages eligible parents to complete and submit the Education Benefit Form, which supports access to additional funding and resources as described above.

Q. Do I still need to maintain funds in the MySchoolBucks account and what is MySchoolBucks?

Yes. If you allow your child to purchase snacks, specialty drinks or second meals, funds must be available on your child's account or cash is needed to be paid at the register. We do not allow ala carte purchases to be "charged" to an account with a \$0 balance thus creating a negative balance. MySchoolBucks interfaces with our Point of Sale cafeteria register system so any balance you maintain in MSB will show up at the registers. Please monitor your child's balance at <https://www.myschoolbucks.com/>

Q. Why is breakfast not free at Dows Elementary and Main Street School?

Currently neither elementary school offers a breakfast program. Should we add a breakfast program in the future, the breakfast meal would then be free.

Q. Where can I find the daily menus and ala carte offerings?

We post the monthly menus on the Irvington website under the Food and Nutrition Department in addition to posting menus at each school. The ala carte menu is also linked to the main monthly menu for convenience. At the

Middle/High School campus, there are many food offerings that are available every day in addition to a rotating daily menu. [Food and Nutrition page](#)

Q. Can a parent restrict certain items from being purchased by their child?

Yes, parents should email gloria.estrada@irvingtonschools.org with any restrictions. The cashiers do their best to see the alerts we place on the register screens and honor these restrictions.

Q. My child needs gluten free or has a special dietary restriction. How do I communicate this to the cafeteria?

Please email gloria.estrada@irvingtonschools.org. While we typically have at least one gluten free offering daily, it is helpful to know these restrictions for meal planning and to alert cafeteria staff.

Q. What food company does Irvington work with and how healthy is it?

We partner with Aramark for our Food Service program, however, we review menus and have created specifications Aramark must follow. All food is free from trans fats, high fructose corn syrup and artificial dyes, including ketchup! We use only Boars Head deli meats, whole muscle chicken and 100% beef. All snacks offered for sale are National School Lunch Smart Snack compliant.

Q. Do we have recycling and composting in place in our cafeterias?

Yes! Our trays and utensils (silverware) are compostable and we have receptacles for regular trash, recyclables and compostable items. There is signage in place to guide our students how to sort their food waste.

Please contact lunch@irvingtonschools.org for account balance issues or our Food Services Director at gloria.estrada@irvingtonschools.org with any questions you may have.

Reference Links:

<https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/ap-ib-act-and-sat-fee-waiver-programs-new-york-state-students>



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