

We never like to raise prices, BUT . . .

You may have noticed that our prices went up a little for paying students this year. Of course, any business needs to raise prices now and again to keep up with costs, but this price increase is a little different, and we wanted to explain it to you in more detail. We hope you will understand why prices went up and how the increase **will help us continue to make sure our kids are well-nourished and ready to learn.**

For each complete meal we serve that meets USDA nutrition requirements, we receive reimbursement from the federal government. Currently, we receive federal reimbursement of about a quarter for each paid meal we serve and a total of **two-dollars-and-seventy-two-cents** for each meal we serve to students eligible for a free lunch.

Over the years, the reimbursement for kids who qualify for free lunches has gone up little by little --very slowly, mind you, and not always adequately to cover the cost of preparing and serving a nutritious meal, but nonetheless the reimbursement has gone up by small amounts fairly regularly.

But most school nutrition programs (ours included) have not raised the price for paid lunches at the same pace – lunch for our paying students last school year cost ___ for elementary school kids, ___ for middle school, and ___ for high school. In some other school districts, the disparity between paid prices and the \$2.72 reimbursement for free meals is even greater, so that, in effect, **the cost of paid meals has been kept artificially low with the support of the free-meal reimbursements.**

So, for the first time ever, school districts like ours across the country are being required by USDA to raise prices for students who pay full price for lunch. **The new federal regulations which take effect this year will require the average paid lunch cost in a district to rise gradually over the next five years until the average price (plus the small reimbursement amount per paid meal) equals the total free-meal reimbursement.**

What makes this increase different is that we will be able to use any additional revenues from the mandated price increase to help meet the new nutrition requirements that are also part of the changes in federal regulations for the National School Lunch Program. These changes, part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, will help us add **more fresh fruits and vegetables**, and even cut back on starchy veggies in favor of **healthier options like squash, carrots, broccoli, and leafy greens.** We'll also be further **reducing sodium, limiting the calorie content of ala carte items, and, within two years, making whole grains standard** for all grain products we serve.

So, while we're always reluctant to raise prices and are acutely sensitive to the hardship even a small increase can cause for some families, we hope that this increase **will have an immediate positive impact by allowing us to provide even healthier meals, so that all of our kids can continue to realize the many positive educational benefits of good nutrition.**

We're here for one reason – to help kids learn as well as they possibly can– and these changes should help us continue to fulfill that paramount mission.

Questions? Please call us at
423-434-5228

School Meals
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Johnson City School Food Service