

## **FOOD SERVICE – Does it affect the Tax Rate and other FAQ's**

### **1) Does the Food Service Budget affect the Tax Rate?**

The food service budget is different than the other departments in that it is a self-sustaining special revenue fund. It is solely supported by the sale of meals and ala carte items sold to students and staff during the school year. It also receives federal reimbursement funds for qualifying free and reduced students by adhering to the rules and regulations of the National School Lunch Program. The Food Service Budget has no effect on the Tax Rate.

### **2) What is the National School Lunch Program?**

**SUMMARY:** This final rule updates the meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to align them with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This rule requires most schools to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat free and low-fat fluid milk in school meals; reduce the levels of sodium, saturated fat and trans fat in meals; and meet the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. These improvements to the school meal programs, largely based on recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, are expected to enhance the diet and health of school children, and help mitigate the childhood obesity trend. **DATES:** Effective date: This rule is effective March 26, 2012. For the full report, please follow this link.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf>

### **3) Does the Food Service Department belong to a buying group or go out to bid?**

The Food Service Department belongs to the New Hampshire Buying Group which is a collaborative of 58 school districts in New Hampshire. The mission of the group is to economically procure quality food and paper products for our students. The benefit of the group is that we have better buying power due to the volume of items purchased. We also benefit from the wealth of knowledge shared by all members within the group. In addition, the Food Service Department goes out to bid for items not in the buying group such as milk and bread.

### **4) What parts of the food services operation are automated?**

The Food Service Department has automated software to manage our student accounts used for the purchase of meals and ala carte items. We also use My School Bucks, which is an on-line service to provide parents the opportunity to deposit funds directly into their student's account. This helps speed up our service lines since funds are easily deposited without our staff handling cash or checks.

### **5) How much does lunch cost at the various grade levels (elementary, middle and high school)?**

The price of lunch at the elementary schools is \$ 2.50 for lunch. The price at the upper elementary and the middle school is \$ 2.75. The price for lunch is \$ 3.00 at the high school. The students are provided with a complete meal consisting of five meal components including protein, grain, fruit, vegetable and milk. We also offer a breakfast program at the high school early in the morning. We also offer ala carte items for sale. The ala carte items sold must meet the federal Smart Snacks Regulations.

**6) Is all food prepared daily at each school? If not, where is food made daily and how is it distributed to all the schools?**

Food is prepared daily at the high school, middle school and the upper elementary school. Those three schools also prepare meals for the three elementary schools in the district. The elementary schools are satellite schools since they do not have kitchens on site. The meals are transported each day with our delivery van. All the food items are transported using thermal carriers.

**7) Is the food service program required to offer free and reduced lunches to qualified students? What is the impact of free and reduced lunch on the overall cost of the program? How does a student qualify for free and reduced lunch?**

The school district operates under the guidance of the National School Lunch Program. We are required to make free and reduced applications available to all families. We receive funding for all free and reduced student meals purchased each month which helps cover the costs associated with meals provided. A student may qualify for free and reduced meals based on financial information provided by the parent on the application. They may also qualify if the parent is receiving benefits from state under the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Interesting Facts....**

Last year the food service department served 307,305 meals to students and staff. We were able to provide 46,001 free or reduced meals to qualifying students during that time. So far during this school year, we have had \$ 272,949 deposited into student accounts by parents using My School Bucks.