

A Friendly Guide for Parents: Understanding School Meal Purchases

We know how important it is for you to feel informed about your child's day at school, especially when it comes to meals and snacks. This guide is here to help you understand how meal purchases work and the options you have as a parent.

Good to Know: Lunch & Snack Purchases

We want to make sure every child has access to a nutritious lunch. Here are a few key things to remember:

- **Lunch isn't automatically free for everyone.** Just like at home, lunch needs to be purchased, unless your child is part of our **Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program**. If you think your family might qualify, please reach out to Joann Goldberg at jgoldberg@livingston.org.
- **No child will ever be denied a lunch!** We promise that if your child comes through the line for a full lunch, they'll always get one, even if their account is low. We believe in making sure every student is fed. Please know that while we'll always provide lunch, parents are still responsible for paying for any meals purchased.
- **Snacks are a bit different.** While we'll always provide lunch, things like extra cookies or chips (what we call "a la carte" items) can be managed differently.

You're in Control: Managing Your Child's Purchases

We completely understand wanting to guide your child's choices, especially when it comes to snacks. Your child's MySchoolBucks account offers some great ways to do just that:

- **Set a daily or weekly limit for snacks:** You can put a cap on how much your child can spend on those extra a la carte items each day or week.
- **Opt out of a la carte entirely:** If you prefer, we can completely remove your child's ability to buy any of those extra snacks.
- **Why we can't fully "close" the account:** Please note that we can't completely shut down their MySchoolBucks account because it's connected to their Genesis account, which is used for more than just lunch.

Lunch & Snack Payments

- Visit [MySchoolBucks.com](https://myschoolbucks.com) to make lunch payments.
- To avoid paying the per-transaction fee when using your credit card in MySchoolBucks, you have the option of sending a check made out to the LPS Cafeteria Account to school with your child. Place checks in an envelope marked "Cafeteria." Checks must include your child's name and student ID number listed in the memo column so that the money is placed in the correct account.
- Apple Pay is accepted in the LHS cafeteria on the deli and pizza lines.

A Note on Handling Denials With Care

We care about your child's feelings. If you decide to limit or restrict a la carte purchases, and your child might be denied an item, here are a few thoughts:

- **Chat with your child beforehand:** A simple conversation can go a long way. Let them know your plan so they understand.
- **We're here to help:** Feel free to reach out to our Food Services team! We can discuss how denials are handled at the register to ensure it's done as discreetly and kindly as possible.
- **Packing from home is always an option:** If you'd rather have full control over snacks and lunch, packing a meal and snacks from home is a wonderful choice too.

We hope this makes things clear and helps you feel more comfortable. If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Food Services team at foodservices@livingston.org.