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Federal Reimbursement for School Meals Overview

The federal school meals programs reimburse schools for each meal they serve. The amount schools receive for each meal depends on household income of the student who ate that meal. Students are divided into three categories based on their family's income: Free, Reduced Price, or Paid. That category determines how much the federal government will pay the school for the meal, and also how much the school will charge the student for the meal.

There is a little more nuance to the reimbursement a specific school may receive, as some schools receive different reimbursement rates for a variety of reasons. However, these basic numbers give a good picture of average what the federal reimbursement for school breakfast and lunch looks like.

School Breakfast Program		
	Federal reimbursement per meal served	Average price of meals to children
Free	\$1.79	\$0
Reduced Price	\$1.49	\$0.30*
Paid	\$0.31	\$1.46**

School Lunch Program		
	Federal reimbursement per meal served	Average price of meals to children
Free	\$3.31	\$0
Reduced Price	\$2.91	\$0.40*
Paid	\$0.31	\$2.50**

data valid 7/1/2018-6/30/2019

* This is the maximum that a school can charge. In Vermont, this fee is paid by the state, not by families.

** This is an average of the national average price for a school breakfast or lunch in elementary, middle, and high schools, according to the School Nutrition Association.

February 8, 2019

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