

Liberty Tech Lunchroom FAQ

(Frequently Asked Questions)

This document answers some common questions about the LTCS Lunch Program. It is subject to change without notice. Please check the LTCS Web Site, where this document is posted, for updates.

When are lunches served?

Lunches are served on a fixed schedule for each class. The lower-school classes eat lunch first, and the upper-school last. Please see your homeroom teacher or visit your homeroom's web site for specific timing information for your class.

What's for lunch?

LTCS uses outside vendors to provide delicious, high-quality, nutritionally-balanced food. We order food from local restaurants you probably eat at all the time, like Piccadilly Diner, Zaxby's, and Zoe's Kitchen. Occasionally we have specialty surprises.

Why doesn't LTCS prepare food on site?

While LTCS has a full kitchen in the building, operating what would be, in effect, a commercial kitchen would be prohibitively expensive and impractical. By using outside vendors, we build on their economies of scale for lower cost and higher quality than we could easily achieve ourselves.

How much does the County, State, or Federal Government subsidize the lunch program?

Not at all. We receive no money from the County, State, or Federal government. The lunch room is not a "profit center" for the school, and in fact, is operated at a substantial cost to the school. But hungry kids don't learn, so feeding kids is important.

Is LTCS subject to Federal guidelines (NSLP)?

Because LTCS does not receive Federal funds for its lunch program, we are not subject to NSLP guidelines. This gives us a great deal of flexibility in our menu. We try to offer kids high quality food that's nutritionally-balanced. We are always looking for ways to have them eat as healthfully as possible, and of course, we want to give them foods they will eat, because the child throwing a full plate of lunch into the trash is the same as the child not getting a lunch at all.

My child won't eat vegetables. Will you make them?

While we try to offer a nutritionally-balanced meal, we can only offer it. It's up to your child to eat it. We'll put the vegetables on their plate (unless they refuse it or it's self-service, like a salad bar), but it's up to them to move it from there.

Can I get the Nutritional Information for each meal?

We're working on that! Stay tuned. On the days that we serve Zaxby's or Zoe's, you can find the nutritional information for those meals on their corporate web sites. In future, we'll have all that integrated, and in a perfect world, it will be right there on the web site for you when you order.

How much do lunches cost?

Currently, the price of our lunches is a fixed \$5.50. That price includes one milk. Extra milk can be purchased at \$0.35 each.

My child doesn't drink milk. Can I get a refund or lower price on the pre-ordered meal, because that price includes the milk that (s)he won't drink?

No. The milk is part of making our nutrition objectives for the meal. If your student chooses not to take the milk, that's their choice, but the meal is planned and priced with the milk in mind.

Can my child just walk up and get lunch?

Yes and no. Our school lunches must be pre-ordered. You use our Lunchroom web site to order food—each week, not later than Friday night, you order lunches for the following week. We order quantities of food based on these pre-orders, so if you don't pre-order, your student will not get the meal served that day, they'll get the "substitute meal." The exception to this is milk. If a child wants a milk and it hasn't been pre-ordered, we will serve milk and charge your child on their school account.

I send my child to school with lunch, but I want them to buy milk. Can I do that? Do I have to pre-order it?

Milk is included with all pre-ordered meals, but if you send your student to school with lunch and they just want/need a milk, they can buy a milk on their student account for \$0.35 that day, it does not need to be pre-ordered.

Why do I have to pre-order meals?

Because our vendors are preparing food in bulk, to order, and delivering it to us to serve, we have to give them fairly exact counts in advance. That ability also lets us keep our fixed price for the meal down.

It's Saturday morning and I'm trying to order lunch for my student for next week, and the system won't let me. Why?

All pre-orders must be in by 11pm Friday night for the following week's service. If you miss the pre-order cut-off, you will need to send your child to school every day that week with a lunch you get or prepare.

I thought I pre-ordered, but my student told me he didn't have a pre-order when he went to the lunch line.

This is usually caused by one of three problems: (1) you got through the pre-order process but somehow missed a day when ordering; (2) you didn't complete the pre-order process; or (3) you put money on your account and thought that was all you needed to do (you didn't go through pre-ordering at all). In order to complete a pre-order, your account first needs to be funded (Deposit Funds, unless you are in the free lunch program), and then you need to go to Pre-orders and get through that process. That involves choosing the correct date range for the week, and adding each of the items to the cart for each day. This is where people have made a lot of mistakes. Once you have a full cart and you hit CHECKOUT ORDER, a summary screen comes up, and it's easy to think you're finished, but you're not. There's a NEXT button in the lower-right corner that you need to hit. If you don't see it, you may need to scroll to make it visible. Find it and hit it. That brings up another screen, which then has a FINISH button. Find it and hit it. This finally brings up a screen that tells you that you have completed a transaction, and it gives you a transaction number (keep for your records) and the option to print a receipt. Only at this point are you finished and have a valid pre-order in the system. If you have any questions or problems, email lunchroom@libertytechcharter.org.

What happens if I don't pre-order/miss the pre-order cut-off?

If you don't pre-order or miss the Friday 11pm cut-off, you can either (1) send your student to school with a lunch you prepare or pick up prior to arrival at school; or (2) deliver a lunch each day yourself to the school for your child *before the scheduled lunch time for the class*.

If I don't send my student with a lunch and don't pre-order, will you let her/him starve?

No! Kids that show up in the service line without a lunch from home and no pre-order will be given a "substitute meal" and charged accordingly. Please note, however, that frequent use of the substitute meal may require us to report the possibility of child neglect to authorities (yes, really, it's the law, and we can get in deep trouble if we don't).

What's the "substitute meal?"

The substitute meal is usually a turkey or ham sandwich (they'll have a choice as available) with cheese, served on wheat bread. Mayonnaise and/or mustard are usually available. The meal comes with milk and serving of fruit.

Is there a charge for a "substitute meal?"

Yes. There's a \$2.50 charge for substitute meals.

I sent my student to school with a lunch, but (s)he got a substitute lunch and got charged. Don't you check?

When a student shows up in the service line asking for lunch, they are served a pre-order if they have it, or a substitute lunch otherwise, no further questions asked. If that student has a "from home" lunch and asks for a lunch in line anyway, we have no way of knowing they have a lunch from home, and neither will we ask—they will be given a substitute lunch and charged \$2.50 on their account. It is up to you to discuss that choice with your student, and settle the account with the school.

Gee, the substitute lunch is cheaper than the pre-order meals. Why can't my child have that every day?

Substitute lunch is intended to be just that—a substitute for either a lunch you provide, or a pre-ordered school lunch. If your child routinely is given substitute lunch, we have to report that to authorities as possible neglect (no really, that's the law, and we can be in deep trouble if we don't).

If my child is/was out sick, can I get a credit for their pre-order that they weren't there to eat?

Sorry, no. We order and pay our vendors based on what is pre-ordered.

If my child chooses to take the substitute lunch instead of the meal I pre-ordered, can I get a credit?

No. We order and pay our vendors based on what is pre-ordered. We will encourage them to take the lunch you ordered and intended for them to eat, but we will not force them. To us, it's more important they eat *something* rather than throw a full plate into the trash. But in that case, you are getting an expensive basic sandwich—the \$5.50 charged for the pre-order stands.

If there's a problem with lunch and my child was forced to take substitute lunch, will I get a credit?

Occasionally, we hope rarely, errors are made and we end up with a shortage. If there's a problem with quality or quantity and we can't serve your child their paid lunch, they will receive the substitute meal at no charge, and their account will be credited for the pre-ordered meal that we were unable to fulfill.

Do you have a Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch option?

Yes! You can apply for the Free/Reduced program. The form is linked on the Liberty Tech web site (www.libertytechcharter.org) or may be requested at the front desk. Complete the form and turn it in to the office. You will hear shortly if you qualify for reduced or free. Your participation in the free- or reduced-price program begins on the service week following our receipt of notice from the office that you've qualified.

If I paid for lunches but then later qualified for free or reduced, can I get a refund?

No. Once lunches have been ordered and paid, there are no refunds.

My child has dietary restrictions or doesn't eat _____. Can I order a special meal for them?

Currently, we do not have the ability to order special meals. We are, however, looking in to how we may offer more choices. For the moment, you will need to send your child to school with a meal that is suited to their specific dietary requirements. Also, please see the question below about allergens.

My child is allergic to _____. Is this in the kitchen, and what accommodations can you make?

Our service line offers products that include or are made in the presence of dairy, eggs, sulfiting agents, wheat, and gluten, and may contain tree nuts and other food allergens. Our vendors prepare food in kitchens where these and other food allergens are routinely included in the food or present during preparation. There are designated eating tables for "nut-free" dining if necessary, but students with food allergies are advised to avoid the service line and the pre-order lunch options. If your student needs a substitute lunch, and that is compatible with their dietary restrictions, (s)he should ask her/his teacher to get it from the service line on their behalf, and advise the teacher and the service staff of those food allergies prior.

Does the lunchroom serve water?

The only beverage served in the service line is milk. We do not offer water (bottled or poured) or any other beverages at this time. You are welcome to send your student to school with alternate beverages, within the limits of the school's guidelines (e.g. no soda pop, etc.).

How do I sign up to pre-order lunches or pay a balance due on my student's account?

To sign up for a pre-order account, please email lunchroom@libertytechcharter.org and provide ALL of the following: your full name, your daytime phone number, the full name of each of your students. We will send back an email with an instruction sheet and the student ID number(s) you need to get registered.

I was contacted about having a balance due on my student account. How do I pay that?

To pay a balance owing on your student's lunch account, go to www.myschoolaccount.com and log in with your username and password. If you don't have an account already, see "How do I sign up" above.

It's the end of the school year and my account has a credit balance. Now what?

If your student is continuing at LTCS in the next academic year, their account balance rolls over and will be there for them. If you are leaving LTCS, any cash balance remaining in the account will be refunded, but you must request it with the office or by emailing lunchroom@libertytechcharter.org. Refunds will be made by check and mailed to your address on file—make sure we have a valid address (ideally, give us the address in your request when you make it).

I have another question, problem, comment or suggestion. Who do I call?

You can contact the lunchroom staff by emailing to lunchroom@libertytechcharter.org. One of our volunteers will get back to you as soon as possible (usually within one school day).