



Pickerington school lunch line goes digital

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Even the school cafeteria has entered the Information Age.

Pickerington schools are offering district families an electronic program that allows parents to prepay for meals and track how their children are using their lunch money.

Through the Mealpay program, parents can use a credit card or check to establish a lunch account for their children, according to Margo Bishop, the district's food services manger.

Once the account is active, the student enters a personal identification number into a keypad at the lunch line's cash register and the price of the meal is automatically deducted from the account.

Through the Internet, parents have access to a statement of all transactions, allowing them to keep tabs on their dollars and their children's habits.

"They can see what their children are buying and eating and keep track of the balance," Bishop said. "It is also nice that young children do not have to carry cash."

The district launched Mealpay in its cafeterias last school year, throughout which administrators worked out any malfunctions in the program. Now that the system is fully implemented and running smoothly, the district is pushing for wider participation, Bishop said.

Families can enroll in the Mealpay program by calling 1-866-542-4197 or by visiting www.mealpay.com.

At Pickerington schools this year, lunches are available for \$1.75 at the elementary level and for \$2 at the middle, junior high and high school levels.

Families can apply for a reduced-price program, which charges 40 cents per meal, and some children may be eligible for a free lunch program.

Bishop said the district will soon mail handbooks regarding the school lunch programs to families.

She added that parents may contact her with any other inquiries they may have at (614) 833-3645.