



Tracking Your Child's Lunch Spending Online

Many of us can remember the days of forgetting our lunch money at home. These days, that typically isn't the case since parents can pre-pay for their child's lunch, but one elementary school has taken pre-paying a step further.

Volunteer TV's Stacy McCloud has more on one school that uses the web to allow parents to track exactly where their money is going.

On the menu at Eaton Elementary: Pizza, chicken pot pie, salad and fruit.

If you're wondering if your child chose the greens instead of dessert, ask no more.

"Parents would send money assuming they were only purchasing a school breakfast or lunch and then they would be out sooner they expected," food services supervisor Alison Garrison said.

It's all part of a computer program installed back in 2002 when cafeteria workers decided having just a paper trail to track pre-payments was too difficult.

"Before if a child lost money and they parents questioned why we had no answer," cafeteria manager Ruth Rogers said.

With the program, parents have been able to bring money to school and pre-pay as much as they like, and even get a paper print out of what their child had purchased. This school year, Eaton has taken convenience one step further, allowing parents to pay online.

"The parents can immediately see what their children are doing with their school lunch money," Garrison said.

This isn't the only perk of "Mealpay." You can also track specifically what your child is eating.

"With all the focus on childhood obesity, I think it's important," Garrison said.

Not only is it easy for the parents, it's easy for students to use. All they have to do is punch in a four digit code, hit enter, then all their information, picture and balance will pop up on a computer screen.

"They move fast, they learn their number, and they punch it in and it thrills them when they learn it," Rogers said.

For parents who don't have online access, there is an 800 number that they can use. Eaton Elementary is the first school in Tennessee to use Mealpay, but school officials hope to expand the program in the near future.