

## School meal ticket new tool for parents Online MealPayPlus improves efficiency

By NATE KARLIN  
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An online meal payment plan for students has become one of the greatest ideas since, well, sliced bread.

The new online service, MealPayPlus, was brought to the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System last spring so parents could see what their children are putting on their lunch trays.

The Web site, [www.mealpayplus.com](http://www.mealpayplus.com), documents purchases and allows parents to make deposits into their child's account from the Web site or by phone.

The program also improves academic efficiency and accountability of money getting lost by eliminating physical transfers from teachers to cafeteria staff, who then count each student's lunch money.

Susan Brock, assistant director of child nutrition, provided the School Board with updated information Tuesday at its formal meeting.

The school system set a goal this year to register 5,000 students. As of Monday, 3,060 students have been added to the MealPayPlus program.

"It's already taken off with a blast," Brock said. "We're not too far from our goal."

She said students from every school are participating in the program, with a little higher interest coming from the East Montgomery, Richview and Sango areas.

As of Monday, 8,774 transactions equaling \$157,000 have been made online.

Brock said those are transactions that do not have to be transferred from the student to the teacher to the cafeteria staff.

"We're thinking it's doing a lot to improve efficiency," she said.

MealPayPlus charges a \$2 convenience fee, which is not paid for by the school system.

However, CMCSS will provide \$2 "bonus bucks" to any transaction of at least \$30, Brock said.

Parents also will receive an e-mail when their child's account is low.

District 1 board member and former principal George Giles recalled the amount of time he devoted to lunch money.

This online monitoring system, he said, will decrease classroom distractions while teachers have to collect money from students.

"As principal, I can't think of how many times I had to answer parents' questions about what they're child was eating when I don't know," he said.

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