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RISD uses hi-tech meal plan

Parents can now keep track of where their children's school lunch money goes with an online program implemented by the Roswell Independent School District.

The program, MealpayPlus, allows parents to log onto their children's accounts at the program's Web site and track what they are eating for lunch at school.

Chantal Brenton, media relations specialist with Horizon's MealpayPlus program, said the program "is easy, since parents aren't giving their children cash. There's always the chance that (cash) can get lost."

The way the program works is simple, too. Brenton said parents go to the program's site at Mealpay-Plus.com and register. They make payments online, while children enter a four-digit code on a keypad at school when they purchase their lunch.

"Whatever is on their tray gets charged on their account," Brenton said.

Parents can then monitor online what their children are purchasing at school. Brenton said this is another benefit, as parents can do the monitoring at their convenience as it is available at any time of the day or night.

Brenton said if parents perceive their children are not making the healthiest food choices, they can discuss nutrition with them. Brenton said setting healthy food standards will affect children in a positive way for the rest of their lives.

According to Brenton, there are 35 states with schools using MealpayPlus and 2.8 million students using the program.

Lyman Graham, director of the student nutrition program for the RISD, said many parents have already registered with the program and he has already heard compliments about it.

Parents "love the convenience," Graham said. He said the program allows parents to not send money with their children to school where it can get lost.

"We're getting more to be a tech society," Graham said, noting that many people pay all, or nearly all, of their bills online.

The program is available at all RISD schools from elementary through high school. Graham said MealpayPlus works for both school-provided breakfasts and lunches. Children who receive reduced-cost lunches or free lunches may also be tracked in the new program.

"I think it's good for the community, good for the school system," Graham said of MealpayPlus. "I'm glad we could do it."