



# News Release

June 24, 2008

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES MEAL PRICES FOR 2008-2009**

**ELK RIVER, MN** -- At its June 23, 2008 business meeting the Elk River Area School District Board of Education approved adjusted meal prices for the 2008-2009 school year.

Because of inflation in the food industry, a factor facing school districts and the economy as a whole, after weeks of discussion the Board of Education agreed to increase meal prices. The following are the 2008-2009 meal prices:

<b>Level</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>
Elementary	\$2.25	\$2.30
Middle/High	\$2.30	\$2.40
Adult (elementary)	\$2.95	\$3.00
Adult (secondary)	\$3.10	\$3.20

Breakfast rates will not change for elementary and secondary schools. The elementary price is 90 cents and for secondary \$1.10. There is no charge for students qualifying for free or reduced price meals.

Julee Miller, General Manager of Sodexo School Services (the company contracted to the school district), said the increases are necessary and are not confined to the district.

"This is happening nationwide and it is because rising food and fuel prices are pushing up the cost of producing school lunches," she said. "To put this in context, we are paying six cents more today for milk than last year so, when you multiply that by the number of student meals it comes out to approximately \$75,000 more a year. Unfortunately, we have no other choice than to pass the increase on to our customers."

Nationally, inflation has driven up the price of milk increased by 17 percent, rice and pasta by 13 percent, cheese by 15 percent and bread by 12 percent. "These are the same types of price increases that we as consumers are facing," she said.

Miller said the School Nutrition Association reports that 78.3% of school nutrition programs have experienced increased costs as a result of implementing their district's nutrition standards.

By federal law, school meal programs are self-sustaining, meaning they must generate their own revenue, to include making up deficits. Miller said the law says school districts must offer hot meals for all students. The average cost of all student meals is between \$2.70 and \$3.10, according to estimates and surveys by the School Nutrition Association.

She added that these adjustments are minimal compared to some districts nationwide. "In Boston they are implementing a 25-cent across-the-board increase and in Brevard County

The Elk River School Area District mission is to educate, inspire and empower our diverse learners to shape their futures, to accomplish their dreams and to contribute positively to our local and global communities.

Florida breakfasts will cost 50 percent more.” In the Twin Cities area our adjustments are similar with some school districts further out, such as New Prague, raising prices as much as 50 cents per meal.

Miller said her program serves approximately 7,400 school meals a day at 16 locations. More than 15 percent of the district’s 12,246 students are on the federal Free and Reduced program. The minimal increases will help offset unforeseen expenditures in the district’s budget. Miller said that without the adjustment her budget would go in the red by \$100,000.

She expects with the new rates to break even, but cautions that this may not be the last increase. “If the economy doesn’t stabilize soon we can expect further increases,” she said.

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