

Roden/Equinox Lunch Program

Facts & Questions

How did the lunch program start?

Over the years, Roden and Equinox have tried different third-party hot lunch program vendors, like Real Food for Real Kids and the Kids Lunch Program. None of them were well received. Last Spring, the Roden and Equinox School Councils began researching possible on-site hot lunch program options for our schools. The goal, to provide meals as tasty and healthy as our existing Breakfast Club and Snack Program.

Our research discovered that TDSB schools are no longer eligible to receive funding or subsidies for **NEW** on-site lunch programs. TDSB's Nutritionist Liaison then told us about Dixon Grove, which is the only TDSB school to create a self-sufficient onsite hot lunch program with a cost-recovery model – one without external funding or subsidies. Dixon Grove's lunch program has been successful because of its student and adult volunteer support. Roden and Equinox representatives visited Dixon Grove to witness first-hand their wonderful on-site lunch program. It was truly inspiring.

Principal, Ms. Pollock, agreed that the Roden and Equinox School Councils could pilot an on-site lunch program to see if we can make it work here. Susanna (Breakfast Club) and Heather (Snack Program) have graciously agreed to bring their expertise in making delicious and nutritious food for the new lunch program.

The lunch program has run for almost a month now (started in October) and the response has been amazing! An average of 50 to 70 students between both schools are participating on any given day. That is **more than double** the number who participated in the third-party Kids Lunch Program last year (less than 30 students). We anticipate even more students will participate in the new on-site lunch program in the coming months.

What days is the lunch program offered?

The lunch program is offered every Tuesday and Thursday.

Who is able to participate in the lunch program?

All Roden and Equinox students in grades 1-8 may participate. It's served in the school gym using real plates and cutlery. This program is not offered to the kindergarten students because they eat lunch in their individual classrooms.

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How much do lunches cost and what do they include?

Lunches are \$4 per meal and include an entrée, two-cut-up vegetables and fruit. Students who order are always welcome to come-up for extra helpings if they want. Plain milk is an additional \$0.50 and chocolate milk is \$0.75.

The exact menu details are sent out to Roden/Equinox families each month prior to service.

Helpful Tip: Confirm with your child prior to ordering milk that they do want it. Students who ordered milk will be offered it; however, if they turn it down, we do not force them to take it. Otherwise they may throw it into the trash which is wasteful. Unopened leftover milk is used the next day in the Breakfast Club so nothing goes to waste.

Is this a “for-profit” lunch program?

No, this is a not-for-profit initiative. The \$4 price you pay covers your child’s meals and helps to subsidize the meals for those students who are not able to afford the program. After all the lunch program expenses are covered each month, whatever is remaining becomes a small honorarium which Susanna and Heather receive as compensation for their time to cook and manage the program.

How do I order lunches?

Orders may be placed through www.SchoolCashOnline.com or through the front office. The front office only accepts exact payments. All meals must be booked by the advertised deadline. We are unable to accept late orders.

Do I have to order the whole month of meals or may I pick and choose the meals I want?

You may pick and choose what meals you want for each month. Regardless of whether you order one meal or all of them, the order deadline is the same date – approx. one-week prior to the month starting.

My child has an allergy/intolerance, can I get a special meal?

Unfortunately, special meal requests aren’t available, but rest assured, all of the meals served are peanut/tree nut FREE and the meat is halal. Whenever possible, lunch items are served separately so students may pick and choose exactly what they want to eat.

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What is the lunch service day process for students?

1. Students who ordered will receive a personalized lunch ticket from their homeroom teacher. It lists exactly what they ordered. The ticket is a great reminder for your child that they will get a hot lunch that day. (You'd be surprised by how many students forget!)
2. Students may exchange their tickets in the gym for their lunch.
3. If a student didn't receive their ticket or lost it, then we will refer to the master lunch list to confirm they are on it. If they aren't on the master list and we know they don't have a lunch from home, then we will provide them with a lunch. Rest assured, no child will go hungry.

My child is a big eater – will they get enough food?

Students are always encouraged to come back for seconds or even third helpings if they want. Our goal is to ensure every child is well fed.

Can I send in a reusable container?

Of course, but it is not required. All of our plates, bowls and cutlery are reusable. We wash them and re-use them for every lunch service.

Can food be taken outside for school yard picnic lunches?

To prevent loss and breakage, our plates, bowls and cutlery can only be used in the school. If your child wants to eat outside, please send them with their own cutlery and a container with a lid. We strive to ensure all students are given ample time to eat lunch indoors and play outside during the lunch hour.

My child has extracurricular at lunch period, may they still participate in the lunch program?

Absolutely! Students may grab their hot lunch before/after their extracurricular. If they wish to take lunch with them to their activity, then we highly recommend that your child come with their own lunch container that has a lid. It will make it easier for them to carry their lunch to wherever they have to go. Otherwise, your child will have to carry the plate/bowl we provide them with to and from their activity which increases the chances of food spilling.

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My child is sick, can I cancel their order?

A minimum of 24 hours notice is required to cancel lunch orders. Please contact the front office directly to request your refund.

I can't afford the lunch program, is there still a way my child can participate?

Our motto is: *No Child Goes Hungry.*

Please speak to the school front office or to Principal Ms. Pollock about participating in our free lunch service. It is confidential and your child will receive an identical lunch ticket like all the other students.

What happens to all the leftovers?

Any leftover fruit and/or veggies are used by the breakfast program, snack program and/or for upcoming lunches. We strive to have minimal food waste. For example, cut-up veggies are often frozen and then used to make future delicious homemade soups.

Leftover lunch entrees are put into small individual serving tupperware and refrigerated or frozen. They are then used on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (the days the hot lunch program is not available) for students who come to school without a lunch (i.e. they forgot their lunch at home). Those students are welcome to inform staff that they need something to eat and they will be given one of the prepackaged entrée meals located in the breakfast room fridge/freezer. There is a microwave in the breakfast room where meals may be heated if required.

Can I help?

Yes, please! You can donate. You can volunteer. You can spread the word. See below for more details.

How may I donate to help subsidize the free lunch service?

If you would like to donate to the lunch program to help subsidize the free lunch service, please either drop your donation off at the front office or make an online donation through the link below. Online donations of \$25 or more will automatically receive a tax receipt. Be sure to select your school from the drop down menu and make a note in the message section that your donation is for the school lunch program. **Donate:** <https://tdsb.schoolcashionline.com/Fee/Details/457/153/false/true>

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How do I volunteer?

The lunch program can't run without at least two adult volunteers every Tuesday and Thursday between 9 am and 1 pm. To sign-up for a volunteer shift, please visit: <http://signup.com/go/dyRkFzC>.

If you can't do a full volunteer shift, but could spare an hour or two, even if it is just one time or once a month, please email chair@equinoxschool.ca or chair@roden.ca. Or feel free to swing by the breakfast room any Tuesday or Thursday morning to offer an extra hand. All volunteers get a FREE meal.

***The lunch program prep, serving and clean-up is 100% done by volunteers.
It is only with the support of volunteers that we may be able to offer the low rate of \$4 per meal.
We need your support to make the lunch program a success.***