The Northern Ozaukee School Board approved an agreement Monday with Taher Food Service that will include breakfast for students when school starts in fall.

Because Taher operates the meal program at no cost to the school district, there was only nominal resistance from the board to the concept of offering breakfast at school on a trial basis.

School breakfast programs are becoming increasingly common around the state, according to Jim Madden, Taher's regional manager.

Board member Steve Burmesch voiced the only challenge to the proposal.

"I don't think we, as a school district, need to provide breakfast to children. That should be the parents' responsibility," Burmesch said.

Ozaukee Elmentary School Principal Cindy Dallmann took immediate exception to that comment.

"We have a lot of children who come to school without having breakfast. Our job is to make sure our kids are ready to learn, and that isn't the case
when they don't have breakfast," Dallmann said.

Jeff Sauer, principal of the middle school and high school, said the same problem exists at the upper grade levels.

"In cases where middle and high school kids are getting on the bus at 6:30 a.m., I know a lot of them are coming to school without having had breakfast," Sauer said.

Interim Supt. Joseph Gassert said research shows student performance in the classroom is closely linked to eating nutritious breakfasts.

Taher is in the middle of a five-year meal service contract with the school district. The state requires an annual review of all meal service agreements.

Revised federal standards aimed at reducing childhood obesity will mean significant changes in what foods are served next year and in what quantities, but Madden said meal prices will not be increased.

Breakfast costs will be $1.25 at the elementary school, $1.50 at the upper grade levels and $2 for adults.

Elementary school lunch prices will remain $2.05, and $2.25 at the secondary level. The cost of milk will remain 35 cents a carton.

An average of 437 lunches are served each day in the district, with 300 paid, 112 free, 25 at a

reduced rate and eight for adult staff members. In addition, about $15,000 is received for providing meals to Rosemary School, the parochial school in Fredonia.

As a component of the updated agreement, the board agreed to layoff three district employees who have been helping with the meal program.

Madden said all three of those employees will be offered jobs with Taher at the same pay level.

Steve Burmesch cast the only vote against the revised agreement.