

## CHARGING SCHOOL MEALS

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may not have enough funds for a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, the Board will allow students who do not have enough funds to pay for the cost of meals to reimburse the District at a later date (aka “charging”) subject to the terms in this policy.

To comply with State guidelines and maintain a system for accounting for charged meals, the Board shall:

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, excluding extras, à la carte items, side dishes, additional meals, and snacks; and
2. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals as well as collects repayments.

Students whose prepaid meal cards or accounts are exhausted, or have no cash on hand, shall be provided a reimbursable meal and provided a 10-day grace period to reimburse the school lunch program accordingly, unless the parent/guardian has provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. The parent or guardian shall be discretely notified in writing when a student’s meal card or account balance is exhausted and/or a meal has been charged. The notification may include a repayment schedule but shall not charge any interest or fees in connection with meals charged.

If the cafeteria suspects a student is abusing the policy, such staff shall discretely report their suspicion to the building Principal or their designee. Written notice will subsequently be sent to the parent/guardian if the student continues to abuse this policy.

Students who cannot pay for a meal or who have unpaid meal debt shall not be publicly identified or stigmatized (including wristbands or hand stamps), required to do chores or work to pay for meals, or have meals thrown away after they have been served. District staff shall not discuss a student’s unpaid meal debt in front of other students. The District shall not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school reimbursable meal fees and will deal directly with parents/guardians.

If a student is without meal money five (5) or more times, the administration will determine if the student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals, and attempt twice to reach the parent/guardian to assist them in the application process for free and/or reduced price meals, and determine if there are other issues within the household causing the insufficient funds and offer appropriate assistance. The school district shall complete and file an application for enrollment in the free and reduced price lunch program on behalf of a student if it becomes aware that a student who has not submitted such an application is eligible pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(d). Staff responsible for assisting foster, homeless and migrant students shall coordinate with the food services staff to ensure such students receive free school meals.

The school district shall notify all parents/guardians in writing on an annual basis at the start of the school year and to families transferring during the year, outlining the requirements of this policy. This policy shall also be published in appropriate school and district publications. The district's enrollment process shall include the application process for free and reduced price meals.

The District shall attempt to recover unpaid meal charges before the end of the school year, but may continue efforts into the next school year. The district shall notify parents/guardians of unpaid meal charges at regular intervals, and may engage in collection activities by district staff, which do not involve debt collectors as defined in federal law (15 USC §1692a), and may not charge fees or interest. The District shall offer repayment plans, and may take other actions that do not result in harm or shame to the child, until unpaid charges are paid.

Remaining funds may be carried over to the next school year. When students leave the District or graduate, the District will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to return remaining funds. Parents/guardians may request that funds be transferred to other students (e.g., siblings, unpaid accounts). All transfer requests must be in writing. Unclaimed funds remaining after three months shall be absorbed by the school meal account.

Staff will be trained on the provisions of this policy and the requirements of Education Law section 908.

Ref: 42 U.S.C. §1779 (Child Nutrition Act of 1966)  
42 U.S.C. §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a) (National School Lunch Act)  
2 CFR §200.426 (accounting for debt in federal programs)  
7 CFR §§210.9 210.12; 210.19; 220.13; 245.5 (accounting in federal school meal programs)  
Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296), §143  
15 USC §1692a (debt collector defined)  
Education Law §908  
USDA Report to Congress, *Review of Local Policies on Meal Charges and Provision of Alternate Meals*, June 2016, [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf)  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies*, USDA FNS Memo SP 46-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies](http://www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies)  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 57-2016 (09/16/16), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP57-2016os.pdf>  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 23-2017 (03/23/17), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP23-2017os.pdf>  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments*, USDA FNS Memo SP 47-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf)  
*Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge - Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools*, USDA FNS Guidance Document (May 2017), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP29-2017a1.pdf>

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