

## **MEAL CHARGE POLICY**

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced and reduced school meals only. The School Committee will provide a regular meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.

### **Meal Charges and Balances**

Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee and for their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. Payment options will be delineated in student handbooks and provided to parents of incoming students. After the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items including but not limited to a second entrée, snack, ice cream, or an additional beverage. The student will still be allowed to take a meal and additional fruits and vegetables and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

### **Payments**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail at regular intervals during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parent/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact food services for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents by setting up an online account (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the school's food service

manager. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents can check their balance at their convenience on the website.

### **Refunds**

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request to the Director of Food Services, Nauset Administration Building, 78 Eldredge Park Way, Orleans, MA 02653

### **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

Continued failure of a parent or guardian to maintain reasonably current accounts may result in a referral to the Superintendent for his/her review. The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for parental assistance.

### **Policy Communications**

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year. This will be posted on the Nauset website and written in student handbooks.

LEGAL REFS: MGL 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017

CROSS REFS: JQ, Student Fees, Fines & Charges

SOURCE: MASC February 2018

*Adopted by Brewster School Committee 11/15/2018, Eastham School Committee 11/20/2018, Orleans School Committee 11/19/2018, Wellfleet School Committee 11/13/2018 and Nauset Regional School Committee 12/8/2018*

