

FOOD SERVICE REGULATIONS

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of school nutrition program.

The purpose of these regulations is to ensure that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding the meal charge policy.

These regulations will establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the school division. The goals are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with division staff, division business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection charges.

You can find more information about this USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requirements at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges>.

Beginning with the first day of school of each year, parents should send lunch or lunch money with their child unless they received free or reduced meal prices from the year before. They will have 30 days from the time school starts to reapply for free or reduced meals. During the first 30 days, students who received free or reduced meal prices during the previous year will continue to be charged those prices. For those interested in applying for free and reduced meals, an application must be submitted each school year. After the first 30 days, the student/s who qualified the year before will revert to being required to pay full price unless an application for free or reduced meals has been submitted and approved. This 30 day window is intended to give parents sufficient time to submit their applications. If an application qualifies the student for free or reduced lunch after the first 30 days, the charged meals that exceeded the first 30 days will remain the responsibility of the parent.

If a student is required to pay full price for meals and the parent is sending in an application, the parent remains responsible for debt incurred on the account until the application is processed.

Students will be allowed to charge up to twelve meals, and the charges remain the responsibility of and must be paid by the parent/guardian. Students may charge no more than twelve (12) meals at a price not to exceed \$33.00 to their accounts. Money brought in to buy snacks/ala carte when a debt is owed will be applied to the debt before snacks/ala carte items can be purchased.

Notice of low or negative balances in a student's meal account are sent to parents and the school principal. Parents are expected to pay all meal charges in full by the last day of the school year.

- At least one written notice is provided to student's parent or guardian prior to the student exceeding the division's charge limit
- If payment of the negative balance is not received within 7 (seven) working days of the maximum charge limit being reached, the debt will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. If the debt is not paid within 30 days of notice being given, it is considered bad debt for the purposes of federal law concerning unpaid meal charges.
- If a parent regularly fails to provide meal money or send food to school with the student and the student does not qualify for free or reduced benefits, the child nutrition director will inform the principal, who will determine the next course of action. If the principal determines that special circumstances are involved that may warrant special consideration for additional charges, the principal will contact the Food and Nutrition Coordinator or the Superintendent.

Parent/Guardians can log onto Prince George County Schools/Cafeteria and download the free MySchoolBucks App onto their phone or can sign up at MySchoolBucks.com. This tool will allow parents to place money on their child/ren's meal account by debit or credit card. This program can have scheduled automatic payments and low balance notifications. A small service fee is assessed for this service. Parents can view account balances and meal purchases free of charge.

Parents may also choose to contact the Food and Nutrition office to place restrictions on your child's account such as "*Meals Only*". The parent would not be responsible for any restricted charges if the account is flagged with a related message.

School Nutrition will send automated phone messages to parents five times a week, Monday through Friday at 6:00 p.m. to inform parents of low or negative balances. Cashiers will also give students an envelope addressed to the parents with a note reminding them that their balance is low and there is a need to send money. Communication may be made by a letter addressed to the parent to be sent home with student. Letters will be sent home, e-mail or mailed during the month of to collect all outstanding charges. These letters will be sent by the Food & Nutrition Coordinator prior to notifying the Director of Finance.

All refund requests over \$5.00 will need to be refunded through our accounts payable department. Refund requests need to be submitted in writing, e-mail, or refund form. A refund form is located on the school division's website under cafeteria. Parents that have students graduating may request a refund or transfer of funds to another child's account in our district. Families that are not approved for free or reduced-price meals may donate the funds remaining in their account rather than receiving a refund when their child leaves the district.

The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household by the beginning of the school year through distribution of required annual notifications and student back to school packets.

Adopted: November 18, 2019
