

Meal Charge Policy

I. Purpose

The goal of the Tate County School District Child Nutrition Department is to provide students with healthy meals each day. However, unpaid charges place a large financial burden on Child Nutrition Department. The Child Nutrition Department is a self-supporting fund that shall not have a negative balance at the close of the school year. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal reporting requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The intent of this policy is to establish uniform meal account procedures throughout the Tate County School District that will be fair and equitable and that will ensure compliance of all who participate in the school meal program. This policy establishes procedures for methods of payment, charge availability and collection methods. The provisions of this policy pertain to all regular and reduced priced breakfast and lunch meals. Please note that the USDA Child Nutrition Program does not require that meals be provided to students that do not have the money to pay, but Tate County School District wants to assure our students have access to a meal even in the event that money is lost or forgotten.

We strongly discourage meal charges, but we understand that an occasional emergency makes it necessary.

II. Methods of Payment

School Breakfast and lunch accounts can be funded through multiple methods:

- Cash or check paid at the register.
- A "No Cash Back" policy will be followed when students pay for their breakfast or lunch while in the serving line. All monies paid will be deposited into the students account.
- Electronic Credit Card and Bank Account Payments through www.myschoolbucks.com can be made for a small convenience fee.

It is strongly encouraged that parents/guardians make meal payments in advance.

III. Charge Availability

- Adults will not be allowed to charge.
- Students that need to charge will receive a regular school meal. Students will only be allowed to charge \$15 on their account.
- A la carte/extra sale items may not be charged at any time.
- Parents will be notified and asked for prompt payment when meals are charged. Weekly letters will be sent home for any negative balance. Please check your child's backpack for these letters.
- When the student reaches the "account cap" they will only be offered a designated menu alternate. Example: Ham sandwich+veggies sticks + fruit + milk.
- This designated menu alternate will be charged to the child's lunch account at the standard lunch rate. It will be reported as a meal to the state and federal school lunch authorities and thus will be eligible for reimbursement.
- Students will only be allowed to charge 5 alternate meals.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for payment of these meals to the Tate County School District Child Nutrition Program.

IV. Collection Methods

- Parents will be notified and asked for prompt payment when meals are charged.
- Weekly letters will be sent home for any negative balance.
- If a student has a negative balance in their account, the parent or guardian will be responsible to pay the balance within thirty (30) days.
- All accounts must be settled at the end of the school year.
- Negative balance letters will be sent home approximately ten (10) days before the last day of school.
- If a student's account is not settled at the end of the school year, the administration may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law or regulation:
 - Withhold report cards until the delinquent balance is paid.
 - Refer the account to a collection agency.
 - Initiate a claim in the court system and/or contact the MS District Attorney's Office.
- If a senior's account is not in good standing at the end of the school year, the student will not receive their cap and gown or participate in graduation exercises. Their lunch account fees will be due at the same time all other dues and fees are collected.

Balances may be checked at any time by logging into www.myschoolbucks.com or downloading the free app for all Apple and Android devices.

V. Refunds

Withdrawn Students: For any student who is withdrawn, a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. An email request is also acceptable.

Graduating Students: Students who are graduating at the end of the year will need to request a refund in writing. Funds can also be transferred to siblings with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds: All refunds must be requested within one year. All unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Tate County School District Child Nutrition Department.