

## **Meal Charge Procedures**

The School Nutrition Program is setup as an enterprise fund, and the food service operation is self-supporting. The program must rely on meal payments and federal/state reimbursements to fund the entire nutrition budget. Unpaid debts are disallowed by the Federal School Nutrition Program Regulations; accordingly, unpaid debts must be collected and paid to the School Nutrition Program.

### **Prepayment**

Students and adults will prepay into their account or pay as they receive meals. Prepayment into personal meal accounts is strongly encouraged, so that less money is handled during meal service, which reduces the amount of time spent in line. Only amounts for meals or other allowable food purchases in the cafeteria are deducted from the account. Prepayments will be made at any time for weekly or monthly meal totals or they will be made in set amounts (\*e.g. \$20.00 at a time.) Prepayments may also be made for the entire year. Prepayments can be made at the school or online through our online payment system, My Lunch Money at <https://www.mylunchmoney.com/> .

### **Payment Responsibilities until Approval of Free and Reduced Lunch Price Meal Application**

Parents who apply for free and reduced price meal benefits are responsible for payment of all school meals and accumulated charges until approval is granted. Federal guidelines allow a maximum of ten (10) days to approve a new free and reduced price meal application. No child is allowed a free or reduced price meal without a current approved application on file in Nutrition services. Parents will receive a notification letter of a student's eligibility showing the effective date. If a notification letter is not received within ten (10) days, the parent should check with the School Nutrition Manager to see if the application has been received.

### **Adult Meals**

There will be no charges allowed for adult meals with the exception of new hires during the time prior to receiving their first paycheck. All adults are encouraged to prepay for meals using the online payment system. Any adult who is not on the School Nutrition payroll must pay the full cost of the meal or foods consumed. The meal portion for adult meals will be the same size as provided for the oldest student in the system.

### **Middle and High School Students**

No charging is allowed in any of the secondary schools. If a negative account balance is on a student's account, school cashiers will make phone calls to parents for account payments. A log of these call attempts will be kept.

A weekly call-out from ParentLink will be made to all parents of students with a debt.

### **Elementary School Students**

A \$10.00 charge limit has been established for elementary students. Once a student's account debt has reached this limit, an alternate meal will be provided for five (5) days, or until the account is brought current, whichever occurs first.

Elementary students will receive a charge notice after each charge. In addition, school cashiers will make phone calls to parents for account payments. A log of these call attempts will be kept.

### **All Negative Account Balances**

If a negative account balance is on a student's account, school cashiers will make phone calls to parents for account payments. A log of these call attempts will be kept. A weekly call-out from ParentLink will be made to all parents of students with a debt.

Principals will assist managers and cashiers in collecting the outstanding meal charges. Principals who direct the manager and/or cashier to disregard the meal charge procedure will be responsible for paying the School Nutrition Program for outstanding meal charges.

Children whose parent/guardians do not pay their meal charges will be referred to the Principal for assistance in collecting payment. Principals may contact school social workers of the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS) for assistance as needed.

### **Alternate Meals**

An alternate meal consists of a cheese or peanut butter sandwich and milk for lunch and cereal and milk for breakfast. The a la carte cost of the alternate meal will be added to the student's account.

Students will be served an alternate meal once they have reached the \$10.00 charge limit. They will receive an alternative meal for five days or until the account is brought current, whichever occurs first. After five days, no meal will be served.

The school system does not desire to give any student an alternative meal. We strongly encourage parents/guardians to monitor accounts to prevent their child from receiving an alternate meal. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to communicate with their child and/or the School Nutrition Program manager or cashier regarding the child's account or meal charges.

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to provide the means for their child to be properly fed and ready to learn. In order to do this they should: provide the money for the child or children to purchase a school meal, complete the free/reduced meal application to determine if they are eligible for free or reduced price meals, or send a meal from home.

At any time during the school year, if a family income decreases, an application for free or reduced price meals may be completed to determine eligibility.

Students who repeatedly abuse the charge policy may not be allowed to charge in the future. Returned checks will result in a "cash-only" payment schedule. A fee will be charged for all returned checks.

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