

543 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and that school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a family may charge no more than the dollar amount listed in the current years student handbook to their account. When the account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Families may deposit meal funds through the parent portal on the ISD 518 website or pay at the school office.
- B. The school district receives school lunch aid under Minnesota Statutes section 124D.11; it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-priced meals regardless of account balance.
- C. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.
- D. A student who has been determined to be eligible for free and reduced-price lunch always must be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.
- E. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
- F. The school district may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal will be charged to the student's account or otherwise charged to the student.
- G. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item. Ala carte items may be purchased cash-in-line for negative account-balance families.

- H. It is the policy of ISD 518 to provide breakfast and lunch at school. The Food Service Department strives to produce quality meals in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.
- I. Families may apply for free/reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are provided to all families in the district prior to the school year. In addition, applications are available at the district office and at each school, and online at the school website www.isd518.net.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES - NOTIFICATION

Family balances are available on Infinite Campus Parent Portal, which can be accessed through the ISD 518 website. Statements may be requested at any time from the Food Service Director via email or telephone.

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance. Families will be notified by the automated calling system and letters sent home.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances not paid prior to the end of the school year will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota-Statutes-section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will

not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e. mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
1. all households at or before the start of each school year.
 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district will post this policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

VI. STAFF MEALS

- A. Staff meals may be purchased at a price determined by the Food Service Department. There shall be no complimentary staff meals. Portions for individual items may not exceed those given to high school aged students.
- B. Staff may charge no more than the dollar amount listed in the current years' handbook. Staff reaching this amount will have their account closed until payment is made in full.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. 124D.111 (Lunch Aid: Food Service Accounting)
42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq. (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
7 C.F.R. 210 et seq. (School Lunch Program Regulations)
7 C.F.R. 220 et seq. (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A

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