

SUBJECT: SCHOOL MEAL SERVICE PROGRAM (LUNCH AND BREAKFAST)

The Board of Education recognizes that the nutrition of district students is an important factor in their educational progress. The Board therefore shall participate in federally funded school lunch programs, and shall provide free or reduced price meal services to qualified district students.

Availability, Application and Notification

Notice of the availability of the free and reduced price meal programs will be sent to the homes of students, local media, the local unemployment office and large employers experiencing layoffs in the area from which the district draws its attendance. Any child who is a member of a family unit whose income is below the federally established scale shall be eligible to receive such services.

To apply for the free [or reduced price] meal program:

- a. Application forms will be available in the main office of each school building and on the district web site <http://www.onteorak12.ny.us/domain/20> and can be completed and submitted at any time during the year.
- b. Completed forms must be submitted to the main office of the school which the student attends prior to any determination of eligibility.
- c. The parent or guardian will be informed of the determination within one week of receiving a properly completed application.

Applications will be kept confidential.

Upon written request, the Assistant Superintendent for Business will hear appeals of determinations regarding such services in compliance with federal regulations governing the National School Lunch Program.

In addition, in order to reach students who are categorically eligible for free [and reduced price] meals and to comply with state law, three times per school year the School Lunch Manager will review the list made available by the State Education Department of children ages three to 18 who are in households receiving federal food assistance, Medicaid benefits (for certain recipients), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to identify students within the district. The district will send a notice to those families apprising them of their student's eligibility to participate in the school meal programs without further application. Parents may decline participation by informing the district in writing. If the service is declined, the student will be removed from the eligibility list.

Meal Charge Policy

The goal of the Onteora Central School District is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Onteora Central School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced school breakfast and lunch meals only. The Onteora Central School District provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their lunch money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

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- Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch each day. A la carte purchases must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast for \$.25 and lunch for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals that are available to all students unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

- Full Pay Students – Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration will 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 if applicable. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals that are available to all students.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for meal payment to the food service program. Discreet notices of deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.
- Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via the Parent Portal or with a check payable to Onteora CSD Food Service. Further details are available on our webpage at Onteora.k12.ny.us. 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 may/will be carried over to the next school year.
- Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will automatically be refunded any balance over \$10.00 unless they have a sibling and then it will automatically be transferred to a sibling's account.
- Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Onteora Central School District Food Service Program.
- Balances Owed collection will follow the policies and procedures set by the school.

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's account balance is exhausted every Wednesday and Sunday by email.
- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges every Wednesday and Sunday by email.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

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- School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- Schools will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility.
- School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.
- Schools using electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.
- Schools will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

National School Lunch Act of 1946, as amended, (42 U.S.C. §§1751-1760)

Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended, (42 USC §§1771 et seq.)

7 CFR Part 245 (245.2, Definitions; 245.5, public announcement; 245.6, categorical eligibility and direct certification/verification.)

Social Services Law §95(7)

Education Law Sections 915, 1709(22) and (23)

Policy 5661 District Health and Wellness Policy

Adopted: 8/1/18