

Nutrition Services Procedures - White Bear Lake Area Schools (WBLAS)

SUBJECT: Unpaid Meal Charge Procedure

PURPOSE: To establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district and ensure that all students are treated with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE:

- White Bear Lake Area Schools recognizes the parent/guardian’s responsibility to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Proper nutritional intake is essential for adequate learning to occur.
- White Bear Lake Area Schools offers breakfast and lunch at each school. The Nutrition Services Department strives to produce quality meals in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.
- Students may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their meal account via cash, check or online payments.
- Households may apply for free/reduced-price meals anytime during the school year. Prior to the school year, applications are available through the online annual update and orientations. In addition, applications are available at the district office, all school offices and in the cafeterias during meal service. The application may also be completed online.
 - Transferring students receive applications in their transfer packet.
 - For assistance with applications families should call the Nutrition Services Support Supervisor at 651-407-7523.
- The responsibility for ensuring that children can participate in meal service is that of the parents or guardians. The responsibility of the district is ensuring that children have a school meals program available to them.

PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFYING FAMILY OF ACCOUNT STATUS:

1. Automated emails and phone calls are made on Wednesdays for paid students with a low balance (\$5.00 or less). Automated negative balance emails and phone calls are sent every Wednesday and Friday for any negative balance.
 - a. Families may also set up alerts and/or automatic payments via their FeePay account.
2. Step 1 - School Nutrition Managers
 - a. Run balance report daily.
 - b. **Grades PK-5:** When a student has charged two lunches (-\$5.20) send “Low Balance Letter” home via teacher mailbox in a sealed envelope addressed to the parent/guardian. This task to be done daily; and only once.
 - i. A phone call using letter language may be substituted per school preference.

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- c. **Grades 6-12:** Cashier verbally inform students when their balance is below \$5.00.
3. Step 2 - Nutrition Services Office
 - a. **All Grades:** Send home “Balance Notification” computer-generated letter to households when account has been charged five lunches or **(-\$13.00)** for elementary students and **(-\$14.50)** for secondary students.
 - b. Include free or reduced-price application information in mailing.
 - c. Send email to principals and kitchen managers with names of students receiving letters.
4. Step 3 - School Administrators
 - a. **All Grades:** The Nutrition Services office will send an email to school principal to inform them that their help is needed to collect overdue lunch funds from student’s with account balances below **(-\$25.00)**. Copy Nutrition Services Coordinator.
 - b. The principal or designee* will contact family and attempt to collect payment, set up a payment plan or complete an application for meal benefits.
 - c. **Seniors:** those graduating with a negative balance will not be able to purchase prom tickets until balance is at \$0 or more.
 - d. **Students Leaving the District:** schools will be responsible for students who leave the district with negative meal balances.
5. Adults, Staff and Faculty members will not be allowed to accrue unpaid meal charges.

NUTRITION SERVICES PROCEDURES FOR NEGATIVE BALANCES DURING MEAL SERVICE:

1. No breakfast or lunch meal will be taken from a student, regardless of their ability to pay. No alternate meal or cheese sandwich will be given to any student with a low or negative balance.
2. No hand stamp or other physical reminder will be given to any student with a low or negative balance.
3. No ala carte is charged at any grade level if a student has a negative balance, even if they have cash in hand. Students will be encouraged to take a fully reimbursable meal or visit the drinking fountain until money is deposited in their account.
 - a. However, if a student has cash in hand, they may purchase one carton of milk to complement home meals.

DELINQUENT TO BAD DEBT COLLECTION:

1. When payment is overdue, but still collectable and efforts are being made to collect it; the debt is classified as delinquent and will remain on accounting documents until collected or re-classified as bad debt.
2. At the end of each school year, debt greater than **(-\$25.00)** becomes uncollectible and is classified as bad debt and must be written off as an operating loss.
 - a. Families of active students in grades PK-11 with a negative balance less than **(-\$25.00)** will carry into the next school year.

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- b. Families actively attempting to pay off balances through payment plans may carry into the next school year.
3. Regulations defined under 2 CFR 200.426 require that bad debts, including losses arising from uncollectible accounts and other claims are unallowable expenses to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA). Therefore, repayment of bad debt must be restored using non-Federal Funds.
4. WBLAS will collect charged meal funds from donations as described below or through district building allocation.
 - a. Any child approved for free or reduced lunch with an outstanding negative balance will be adjusted to \$0. These charges will be tracked and invoiced to district buildings quarterly.
 - b. Schools are encouraged to budget for bad and delinquent debt charges each year.
 - c. Totals from closed accounts will be invoiced to each building and taken off of the following year's carry over value.
5. Records must be kept to document appropriate handling of bad debt including:
 - a. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges in accordance with this meal charge policy.
 - b. Evidence the collection efforts fell within the timeframe and methods established by this meal charge policy.
 - c. Financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal charges became an operating loss.
 - d. Evidence any funds written off as bad debt were restored to the NSFSA using non-federal funds.

DONATIONS AND ACCOUNT REFUNDS:

1. Site-specific donations for uncollectible accounts should be sent to the building and put into their donation account to offset future expenses.
2. If a student is graduating or moving out of the District, families should complete a ["Request for Refund - Nutrition Services"](#) form. Families may choose to refund the money, transfer to a sibling or donate to the Nutrition Services Angel Fund.
 - a. This form may be found on the Nutrition Services webpage, school kitchens and school front offices.
 - b. A balance remaining after five years in a student's account that has left the District will be receipted into the Nutrition Services General Revenue Account. This will be documented in the nutrition services office and in the student's permanent electronic file.
3. In addition to donations made on the "Request for Refund-Nutrition Services" form. Donations are accepted year round from individuals, groups or businesses. Contributions should be mailed

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to the School Nutrition Office at 4855 Bloom Ave, White Bear Lake, MN 55110. Checks should be made payable to White Bear Lake Schools School Nutrition Angel Fund.

4. The Nutrition Services Angel Fund is a fund designated for students experiencing financial hardship and do not qualify for meal benefits. Money that is donated to the Angel Fund may only be used per Principal or Designee approval*. A request should be made via e-mail to the Kitchen Manager or Nutrition Services Support Supervisor.
 - a. The Angel Fund is a temporary solution until other arrangements can be made to assist the child and family on a more permanent basis.
5. The Kitchen Manager will forward requests to the Nutrition Services Support Supervisor who will file the request and transfer money from the district Angel Fund to the designated student's account, noting "Angel Fund transfer per _____" in the Remarks.
 - a. If money comes in from the student, email the Nutrition Services Support Supervisor to adjust money back into the Angel Fund, including student's name in the Remarks.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- This procedure will be distributed to households annually via the online annual update, kindergarten and pre-K orientation, transfer packets and the Nutrition Services website.
 - The policy will be mentioned on reminder calls and emails as well as in Balance Notification letters.
- This procedure will be distributed annually to school and district level staff responsible for enforcement such as School Nutrition Staff, Principals and their designees, nurses and other District Level administrators as appropriate.
 - Schools may choose to share information about the policy with families in other communication such as student handbooks, newsletters and/or in online portals.
- Procedure will be assessed at least every 3 years or as needed.

*Designee must be an appropriate staff member only; that has been trained on USDA's confidentiality requirements who have a need to access a child's account balance or eligibility information such as an assistant principal, counselor, social worker, homeless liaison, special education case manager or other positions designated as assisting children in need. Only authorized persons may contact families regarding meal accounts. For example, parent or guardian volunteers may not follow up with debt collection efforts for unpaid meal charges.