

MEAL CHARGE

Background

On November 6, 2017, Act 55 of 2017 amended Section 1337 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code to require school boards to explicitly require schools within their jurisdictions to provide school meals to students regardless of their ability to pay and to prohibit certain acts. The practice of the Mt. Lebanon School District has always been to provide its students with healthy meals and not to stigmatize students who cannot pay for meals. However, the Board must adopt a meal charge policy for those students who arrive at the cafeteria without the appropriate account balance or money and also establish collection protocols for the collection of meal balances that complies with Act 55 of 2017.

Objective

It is the objective of this policy to ensure that every District student who desires a meal receives a meal, to set parameters under which negative meal balances can occur, and to establish communication and collection protocols of such negative meal balances.

Policy

It shall be the policy of the Board that:

All District schools shall adhere to the following guidelines and directives in an effort to ensure each student receives a daily school meal and that the District receives any money owed as a result of meals purchased in the cafeterias:

1. Regardless of whether a student has money to pay for a school meal or owes money for school meals, all schools shall provide a school food program meal (consistent with the type of school meals served generally to students in that school) to a student who requests one, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written directive to the school to withhold a school meal.
2. When a student owes money for five or more school meals, a representative of the District shall make at least two attempts to reach the student's parent or guardian to have them apply for participation in the free/reduced lunch program and may offer assistance in helping them apply.
3. Communications regarding money owed by a student for school meals will be made to the student's parent or guardian and not to the student. Emails, phone calls, written notices and other methods of communications directed to the parent or guardian may be utilized. District representatives may also contact the student's parent or guardian by means of a letter addressed to the parent or guardian that is delivered by the student.

4. District schools shall not publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes money for school meals.
5. District schools shall not require a student who cannot pay for a school meal to perform chores or other work to pay for the school meal. This prohibition shall not apply if chores or other work are required of all students regardless of the student's inability to pay for the school meal.
6. District schools shall not require a student to discard a school meal after it was served to the student due to the student's inability to pay for the school meal or the amount of money owed by the student for earlier school meals.
7. Students will not be allowed to charge a la carte items once they have a negative balance; however, they may pay for a la carte items with funds in hand even with a negative lunch balance.
8. When a student's account has a negative balance of \$50 or more, the account may be referred to the magistrate or a collection agency or other collection procedures deemed appropriate for collection against the parent or guardian. The parent or guardian will be responsible to pay the amount due to the District, plus any and all costs incurred by the District including court costs, attorneys' fees, collection agency commissions and/or fees and all other related expenses.
9. Any negative balance will also be subject to any other applicable District policies and practices as may otherwise be in effect now or at a later date, as permissible under Section 1337.

Administrative Responsibility

It shall be the responsibility of the Administration to implement and enforce this policy, and to develop Administrative Procedures for implementation and enforcement where necessary.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to:

1. All District Staff
2. The Mt. Lebanon Community

Adopted February 26, 2018