

**Beaufort County School District  
Unpaid Meal Protocol  
June 8, 2017**

**Topic:**  
Unpaid Meal Protocol

**Background:**

On October 28, 2011, the Board voted unanimously to approve a set of district-wide procedures on how to collect payment for school meals and prevent delinquent accounts, and also how to handle cases where parents or guardians fail to make payments. Schools are required to provide hot meals only to students whose family incomes are low enough to qualify those students for free meals.

The Board-approved procedures detail, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, how payments are solicited, gathered and documented. The procedures also give each school principal the authority to determine whether a student is allowed to eat a hot meal if the student hasn't paid and is not eligible for a free meal.

A key part of the approved protocol requires that alternative meals may be provided in the absence of payments for students owing for meals. The decision to provide a student with an alternative meal – cheese crackers or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich – will be decided by a school administrator at the school's expense. This meal will be provided before the student gets in the cafeteria line.

**Present:**

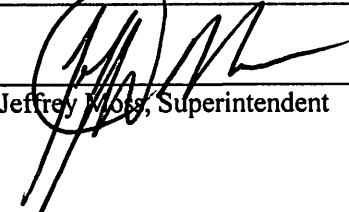
Pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, The USDA has issued Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016 requiring school districts and other school food authorities to establish a written and clearly communicated student charging policy no later than July 1, 2017, to ensure that unpaid student meal charges do not affect cash flow and fund balances in child nutrition programs, as well as to clarify local decisions regarding the use of alternative meals.

**Recommended Motion:**

Approve changes to the Unpaid Meal Protocol, as approved by the Board in 2011 to include the recommended changes by administration:

- Per the USDA guidelines, students are considered paid students until the household application for free and reduced priced meals has been processed by the district.
- Any outstanding amounts at the end of the school year are the responsibility of the school for both active and inactive students.
- Adjustments to student meal accounts during the school year can only be made in the following cases: Cashier Errors, Meal Application Processing Errors, CEP Student Balances, McKinney-Vento & Foster Child Student Balances, and Direct Certified Student Balances.

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Jeffrey Moss, Superintendent

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Tonya Crosby, Chief Finance & Operations Officer

## **Unpaid Meal Protocol**

While provisions are made for all students to participate in the District's Food Service and Nutrition Program-From time to time, alternatives must be used to ensure that ALL students have an opportunity to participate in the Food Service Program every day. Schools are not required to serve hot meals to students who are eligible to receive reduced-price or full-priced meals. Like their parents and us, we are human and on occasion can be expected to forget to bring payment. This protocol has been drafted to foster consistency in procedures below:

- Per the USDA guidelines, students are considered paid students until the household application for meals has been processed by the district.
- The School Principal has final authority to determine when a student is allowed to eat a lunch or breakfast without money to pay. The School Principal may decide to allow a complete meal or offer an alternative meal. An example of an alternative meal would be:
  - 1) Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich and non-fat milk or water
  - 2) Cheese Crackers and non-fat milk or water
- At no time should a student be removed from the lunch line if they cannot provide payment. It is the responsibility of the school staff to identify the students who owe money or who are without money prior to entering the cafeteria for meals.
- If the Principal allows a complete meal, payment is expected the next day.
- An alternative meal may be provided in the absence of payment for student owing for meals. The decision to allow students an alternative meal will be decided by an administrator at the school's expense through Student Activity Funds. These meals will be provided before the student gets in the Cafeteria Line.
- Cafeteria Managers will provide a negative balance report to the principal or his/her designee at least weekly. Cashiers will give notification to students as soon as they incur credits on their account and will refer these students to an administrator as follows:

### **Elementary and Middle Students**

Students should not accumulate charges from more than the cost of one lunch meal on their account. A student's meal may be denied only after approval by the School Principal and payment is expected the next day. In addition, a note will be sent home with the student notifying the parent/guardian. Excessive fees will spur a parent conference.

### **High School Students**

Students not having the funds for their meal will not be allowed to charge. Principals will provide an alternative meal.

- Following proper notification to the parents, the School Principal may deny credit to students who owe for meals. Proper notification must include the opportunity for parents to file a new Free or Reduced Meal Application and documentation that they were notified of the date that meals would be stopped.
- All activities related to student credit should be documented in writing at each level until the problem is resolved.
- Students who are unable to secure sufficient funds from their parents for meals but who do not qualify for free or reduced meals may need the assistance of other state agencies. These possibilities should be explored when students are denied meals.
- **Schools must make every effort to collect Free and Reduced Meal Applications from 100% of the student body.**

The following procedures will be used to collect meal credits during the Summer months and before the school year begins:

- The Food Service Staff will provide the School Administrator with a list of all students with outstanding debts.
- School staff will use this list to contact each parent before the start of the next school year by telephone or letter, documenting each contact. Parents who do not pay, should be informed that if payment is not received prior to registration, their child may be denied meals or a payment plan may be set up at registration. Refusal to pay may result in legal action.
- **Any outstanding amounts at the end of the school year are the responsibility of the school (Both Active and Inactive Students) and payment must be remitted to the Food Service Department prior to June 30 of each year.**
- Adjustments to student meal accounts during the school year can only be made in the following cases:
  - 1) Cashier Errors
  - 2) Meal Application Processing Errors
  - 3) CEP Student Balances
  - 4) McKinney-Vento Student Balances
  - 5) Direct Certified Student Balances
  - 6) Foster Children