

School Lunch Meal Payment Policy

It is the goal of the District to provide students with healthy meals each day. However, unpaid charges place a large financial burden upon the residents of the District. The purpose of this policy is to establish meal payment and "negative balance" guidelines which:

- Treat all students with dignity regarding meal accounts
- Help maintain the financial integrity of District food services
- Encourage parents/guardians to assume the responsibility of meal payments
- Establish consistency regarding charges and collection of balances
- Establish a framework for communicating this policy and District procedures to families and staff

Free and Reduced Meals.

All families are encouraged to apply for the Free/Reduced Breakfast and Lunch Program. Application forms are available through the annual registration process, at the main office of each school and on the SAU 41 website. Applications may be made at any time during the school year.

Pre-payment is required for all student purchases.

All schools in the Hollis Brookline School System [SAU41] utilize a computerized program that assigns an account number to each student. Parents/guardians are expected to maintain enough money in their children's meal accounts to cover the costs of meals, ala carte and snack purchases. The payment program tracks each student's deposits and purchases. This can be done in two ways:

1. By cash or check following the established procedures in your child(ren)'s school(s) OR
2. By credit card through the school's online electronic payment service. Transaction fees may apply.

Negative Balances

Student meal account balances will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Parents will be notified when a student's meal account balance falls below \$10.00, and again if the balance falls below zero. Parents will be asked to pay the account in full immediately. When

forwarding notices to parents regarding low or negative balances, staff are to assure that the communications are discreet, and confidential.

If any student's account falls into the negative, a standard "reimbursable" meal will be provided and charged to the student's account. (A reimbursable meal is defined as a meal consisting of: meat/meat alternative, grains, fruits, vegetables and milk and as further defined by the National School Lunch Program requirements.) Staff must take all reasonable steps to minimize statements or actions that may overtly identify children eligible for free meals. Ala carte and snack purchases are not permitted for any student that has a negative balance. The student's account balance must have sufficient funds for these types of purchases. This policy, and this paragraph specifically, shall apply equally to all students, whether free/reduced/or full pay.

If a student meal account consistently has a negative balance, the administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families will be encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child if applicable. When appropriate, the District may enter into a payment arrangement to bring student accounts current.

Negative balances which continue for more than two months or exceed \$150, may result in formal collection activities, such as small claims court.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to:

- **Families**
 - At the start of the school year
 - Upon enrollment of students who transfer mid-year
 - In Student handbooks
 - On the School websites
- **Staff** who are charged with:
 - Collecting payments
 - Notifying families of low/negative balances
 - Enforcing the policy (e.g., food service managers and cashiers)

The District will document and maintain a history of the communications made pursuant to this section.

1st Reading: September 6, 2017

2nd Reading: October 4, 2017

3rd Reading: November 1, 2017

Adopted: November 1, 2017