

Lakeland Joint School District

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

8245

Unpaid School Meal Charges

The District adopts the following policy to ensure District employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, avoid identifying to other students or bystanders students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

Unpaid Meal Charges

When a student's school meal account funds are exhausted, a student paying the full or reduced price for meals may charge no more than **three (3)** meals to his or her school meal account. Students may charge breakfasts and lunches up to the maximum amount. Charging of a la carte or extra items to a student's account will not be permitted.

Students who have charged the maximum amount and cannot pay out of pocket for a meal will be provided an alternate meal.

The Board directs the Superintendent to draft a procedure detailing the manner in which notice of low account balances shall be given. The District will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Families will be notified by a letter sent home with the student.

Students and parents/guardians of students are encouraged to prepay meal costs. Payments for school meals may be made by:

1. Bringing payment to the school OR District office; or
2. Making payment on the District Nutrition Services website.

The District will continue to work with food services to resolve unpaid account balances.

Notification

The District will provide a copy of this policy to all households at the start of school each year and to families and students that transfer into the District at the time of transfer. All District staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy shall also receive a copy of this policy. It may also be communicated to school social workers, school nurses, the homeless liaison, or other staff members who may assist students in need. The District may also make this policy available in student handbooks, on the District website, or by other means deemed appropriate.

Records

Records of how and when this policy is communicated to households and staff will be retained. The District shall also retain documentation of the handling of bad debt, including:

1. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges in accordance with this policy and procedures;
2. Evidence the collection efforts fell within the timeframe and methods established by this policy and procedures;
3. Financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal charge(s) became an operating loss; and
4. Evidence any funds written off as bad debt were restored to the nonprofit school food service account using non-Federal sources.

Charitable Assistance

School buildings may establish an unpaid meal charges account to cover the cost of unpaid meal charges. Charitable groups, individuals, school fundraisers, and others may donate to this account's whole balance or to an individual account balance. Parents and guardians of children who pay the full amount for school meals and who have funds left over in their school meals account at the end of the school year may donate these excess funds to the unpaid meal charges account or may carry their excess funds over to the next school year.

Other Reference: 2017 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools, United States Department of Agriculture
Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance Q&As, March 23, 2017, United States Department of Agriculture

Legal Reference: SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies, United States Department of Agriculture

Policy History:

Adopted on: October 10, 2017

Revised on: May 8, 2023