

Preston

FOOD SERVICE: CHARGING POLICY

The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious and health foods, through the District's food service program, that will enhancing learning. This school nutritious program is an essential part of the education system and by providing good-tasting, nutritious meals in pleasant surroundings; we are helping to teach students the value of good nutrition.

The Board of Education (Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced priced meals to eligible elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. Applicants for such meals are responsible to pay for meals until the application for the free or reduced priced meals is completed and approved. All applications for free and reduced priced lunch and related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.

Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults. Adults are not allowed to charge meals and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

The Board prohibits the public identification or shaming of a child/student for any unpaid charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student,
- Designating a specific meal option for such student or otherwise taking a disciplinary action against such student.

A student needing to charge a meal will be informed of his/her right to purchase a meal, which excludes a' la carte items, for any school breakfast or lunch.

In order to sustain the District's food service program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals, therefore any charging of meals must be consistent with this policy.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the Food Service Director, Mr. Thomas O'Connor. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced priced lunch to apply. Applications available on our school website or in our school's main offices.

Definitions:

“Delinquent Debts” are when unpaid meals charges, like any other money owed to the non-profit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

“Bad Debts” are when unpaid meal charges are not collected and are considered a loss. Such debt must be written off as an operating loss, which cannot be absorbed by the non-profit school food service account but must be restored when using non-federal funds.

Student Meal Service Guidelines:

- The District uses Power school for meal accounting. Parents make deposits, to their child’s school meal account by sending in cash or check.
- A’ la carte items shall not be charged at any time. Additionally, student may only charge one meal per day during their meal service period, which includes Breakfast and Lunch.
- Students will be respectfully reminded at the Point of Sale, by the cashier, when they owe meals. This process will occur whenever a student account is negative (-). Notices will go home with Preston Elementary School students when more than three (3) meals have been charged.
- Communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a child’s unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries, application for free or reduced priced meals and the Department of Social Services’ supplemental nutrition assistance program and a link to the Town’s website that lists any community services available to residents of our school district.
- No student shall be deprived a reimbursable meal due to forgotten or lost meal money.
- The Board will accept gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school meals.
- The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary. The District/School policy requests that all charges must be paid in 7 days at the Point of service.
- If any students’ unpaid meal charges equal 30 meals, the parent/guardian of the student will be referred to the designated McKinney-Vento act Homeless Education Liaison or School Social Worker.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District’s efforts to recover from household’s money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The school food authority is encouraged to consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs which would be incurred to achieve those collections.

Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered “delinquent debt,” as defined, as long as it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30th, effective with the 2022-2023 School year.

After reasonable attempts are made to collect the delinquent debt, and it is determined the further collection efforts are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified and “bad debt”.

All debts not paid for before the end of the school year will be refunded the school lunch account the Board of Education. The school lunch program cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid. The school district may refer any unpaid bills/debts to a collection service.

The B.O.E in Preston does except gifts, donations, or grants from public/private sources for the purpose of paying unpaid meal charges.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring the school or school district during the school year.

This policy shall be included in student/parent handbooks, on online portals the households use to access student accounts, placed on the District’s website, on the website of each school, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals and again to the household the first time the policy is applied to a specific child.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also should be informed of this policy.

The District’s school food authority shall maintain, as required documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.