HEWLETT-WOODMERE UFSD **Policy 8505**

(X) Required
( ) Local
( ) Notice

Meal Charge Policy

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may forget to bring meal money to school. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible behavior and to minimize the fiscal burden to the School District, the Board of Education will allow students who may forget meal money to "charge" the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms in this policy. The School District shall not charge any interest or fees in connection with any meals charged. Nothing in this policy is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt.

The School District operates and maintains a point of sale system for the purpose of providing parents/guardians of students enrolled in the School District with the ability to fund school meals. The School District's point of sale system allows for automatic replenishment when a balance reaches a certain amounts set by the parent/guardian of the student. The School District will encourage parents/guardians of students in the School District to avail themselves of this option.

As part of its efforts to decrease student distress or embarrassment connected with unpaid meal charges, the School District shall not:

a. publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means including, but not limited to, requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
b. require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;
c. require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals;
d. take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees. A school or school district may attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector; or
e. discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.

To comply with State guidelines, to maintain a system for accounting for charged meals, regarding both full and reduced-price meals, the Board of Education shall:

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, excluding extras, a la carte items and snacks; meals, defined as items on the menu, excluding extras and snacks, to be charged;
2. all charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year;
3. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals as well as collects repayments;

4. notify parents on a timely basis of outstanding charges by the automated telephone or electronic system or by mail;
5. provide parents with an opportunity to establish a repayment schedule for outstanding meal charges; and
6. determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals when a student owes money for ten (10) or more meals. The School District shall:
    i. make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
    ii. make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
    iii. contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal and offer any other assistance that is appropriate.

Students whose parents or guardians have unpaid school meal fees shall not be shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meals fees. To that end, the School District shall provide each student with the student's meal of choice for that school day of the reimbursable meal choices, if the student requests one, regardless of unpaid school meal fees. A student's parent or guardian may provide written permission to the School District to withhold a meal in the event of unpaid meal charges in excess of those permitted herein.

Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student charged (received) the meal, not the day the charge is paid back. When charges are paid, these monies are not to be considered "a la carte" transaction, as section on the daily cash report or deposit summary reads "charges paid." Students eligible for free meals shall not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases.

In no event will a student whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal charges be shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meal charges.

Families may apply for free/reduced meals at any time during the school year. The School District's administration will discretely notify parent/guardians of students who regularly have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts of the application process for free and/or reduced price meals. Information concerning the availability of free and reduced price meals will be provided to the parents/guardians of all students enrolled in the School District prior to the start of the school year. Parents/guardians will be advised that the application for free-reduced price meals is available on the School District's website and at all schools in the School District. https://www.hewlett-woodmere.net/Page/405

If the School District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the school or School District shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in schools. Applications are mailed to all families prior to the start of the school year. In addition, applications are available at the School District's Administrative Offices.

The School District shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or if the school or school district chooses to use an electronic meal application, provide in school enrollment packets an explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost. In addition, the School District will send a letter home to all parents or guardians on an annual basis prior to the opening day of school and, in the case of transfer students at the time of transfer, outlining the requirements of this policy. The policy shall also be published in appropriate school and School District publications.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the payment for meals provided to their child/children by the food service program. The School District's Food Services Staff will provide notices to parents/guardians of low or deficit balances at regular intervals during the school year so that deficit balances can be corrected in a timely fashion.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via https://hewlett-woodmere.revtrak.net/ or with a check payable to Hewlett-Woodmere Cafeteria Account. Further details are available on our webpage at https://www.hewlett-woodmere.net//site/Default.aspx?PageID=5989. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds:

Students who withdraw and/or have graduated from the School District and who have balances remaining in their meal accounts may submit a written request by standard mail or e-mail for a refund of any money remaining in their account and/or the transfer of said remaining balance to a sibling's account. Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools Food Service Program.

Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student charged (received) the meal, not the day the charge is paid back. Families may apply for free-reduced price meals at any time during the school year. Applications are mailed to all families prior to the start of the school year. In addition, applications are available at the School District's Administrative Offices.

The School District shall send a letter home to all parents on an annual basis prior to the opening day of school, outlining the requirements of this policy. The policy shall also be published in appropriate school and School District publications.

The school homeless liaisons shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure that homeless, foster, and migrant students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law. The School District will provide training to staff concerning the procedures to be utilized in the event a student's unpaid meal charges exceed ten (10) outstanding charges and the manner in which affected parents/guardians will be provided with assistance in establishing eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

Adopted: September 12, 2018