

SUBJECT: FOOD SERVICE ACCOUNT CHARGING & MEAL SHAMING REGULATION

Account Charging

Although not required by law, because of the District's participation in the Child Nutrition Program, this regulation establishes a system to allow students to charge meals. Charging a meal is a courtesy that the Marcellus Central School District extends to its students in the event that a child does not have available funds to purchase a school lunch. Although the following opportunity for charging of meals is afforded to students, parent(s)/guardian(s) should ensure accounts are adequately funded.

Grace Period

- a) There is no grace period. Unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal, all students may charge for a reimbursable breakfast and/or lunch when a negative balance exists, but are not permitted to purchase (with either cash or charge) snack/a la carte items as long as a negative balance exists on their cafeteria account. School district employees will not:
 - a. subject students to distress or embarrassment.
 - b. 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 strap.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
 - f. use a debt collector to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian.
 - g. discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.
- b) If, at the end of the school year, the District allows students to accumulate charges and those charges are not paid, the school will subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for all unpaid meals by June 30th of each year. The subsidy will be from the general fund.

Notification of Low or Insufficient Balances

The following protocols are to be used to communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding low balances to assist them in ensuring that their child's accounts are adequately funded:

- a) The district utilizes a computer system that allows for parents to receive e-mail notifications when their child's balance drops below an amount specified by the parent. The district encourages parents to take advantage of this feature, and provides information via the district's web site and via periodic communications throughout the year.
- b) The district also utilizes a computerized messenger system that places a phone call every Tuesday and Thursday to parents/guardians for any negative balances greater than \$2.00. The system will continue to call every Thursday until the negative balance is less than \$2.00.

- c) Each cafeteria distributes notifications to parents/guardians whose child(ren) have a negative balance that exceeds the value of two reimbursable meals on a weekly (KCH) or a monthly (DMS & SHS) basis via postal mail.
- d) On a weekly, biweekly and/or monthly basis, the Food Service Director will generate a list of negative balances exceeding the value of four reimbursable meals and forward to the building principal for their use in addressing concerns regarding negative balances.
- e) Parents or guardians of students experiencing a negative balance will be provided with assistance in establishing eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for their children. The district will make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free or reduced meals. For those that are not directly certified, the school district will 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. The school district will 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.
- f) 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 district shall complete and file an application for the student.
- g) School liaisons required for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

Adult Accounts

All adults, including staff and faculty of the Marcellus Central School District, are required to pay for meals at the time of service using a pre-paid account or cash.

Staff Training

Staff will be informed of the contents of this regulation and corresponding policies to ensure that the school district's procedures are carried out correctly.

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