

## **Exhibit: School Meal Payments**

Mapleton Public Schools (the “District”) is committed to ensuring that all students receive the nutrition they need to engage in active learning during the school day. In accordance with applicable Federal guidance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this exhibit and accompanying policy is intended to serve the purposes of meeting student needs, minimizing the identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintaining the fiscal integrity of the District’s school food service fund.

Mapleton Public Schools participates in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, which provides free or reduced-price meals for eligible students. Breakfast is available at no cost to all students, and lunch prices are available on the District’s website.

### **Meal Accounts**

Mapleton Public Schools will establish a student meal account for each student. Adults can request an account by contacting the school kitchen.

Parents/guardians will be encouraged to pre-pay for student meals. A parent(s)/guardian(s) may add money to a student meal account in person with cash or check, or online via [www.myschoolbucks.com](http://www.myschoolbucks.com) at no additional charge. Checks returned unpaid may be subject to a fee.

Students will be permitted to pay for meals and/or add funds to student accounts on the day of service.

If a student has money in hand to purchase a meal, the student must be provided a meal regardless of any unpaid student meal account balance. A student’s money may not be used to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day’s meal. Any additional money received by the student over the cost of the meal may be collected to help reduce the account’s negative balance.

A meal account balance remains with the student until the student is no longer enrolled in the District. Students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation will receive a refund in the amount of the credit upon request by contacting the Nutrition Services Department. All unclaimed positive balances will be handled following the Colorado unclaimed property process.

### **Meal Charges and Complimentary Replacement Meals**

Students who do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service will be permitted to charge a meal. Students charging a meal will not be permitted to charge á la carte or “extra” items, such as a second milk or additional entrée.

All students in grades Pre-K through 8 will receive a meal regardless of their account balance.

Students in grades 9-12 will be allowed to charge up to five (5) meals. After charging five (5) meals, students in grades 9-12 will not be permitted to charge meals until payment arrangements are made. Students who do not have money to cover the cost of a meal and are ineligible to charge a meal will be offered complimentary salad bar access.

Adults are not permitted to charge meals or á la carte/extra items.

### **Notification of Low or Negative Balances**

Parents/guardians can choose to receive notifications when a student meal account balance is low by creating an account at [www.myschoolbucks.com](http://www.myschoolbucks.com) and signing up for notifications.

Households will be notified of negative balances. Weekly telephone notifications will go out to the household when a student meal account balance reaches \$5 or more in the negative.

Periodically throughout the school year, any account that is \$10 or more in the negative will be sent a warning letter/email indicating they have a negative balance and need to make prompt payment to Nutrition Services for all student account debts.

Parents/guardians will be directed to contact the Nutrition Services Department to set up a payment arrangement if payment in full is not feasible. Collection efforts may begin when an account reaches a negative balance of \$25 or more if payment arrangements are not made within a reasonable amount of time.

Notification of negative student meal account balances may be sent to parents/guardians in the form of a letter mailed to the student's home address, an email to the parent's email address (when provided), an automated phone call, and/or a text message (if registered) to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Notifications shall be directed toward the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases.

When notified in writing of a low or negative balance on a student meal account, parents/guardians will be reminded of this policy and the process for submitting applications for free or reduced-price meal benefits. Parents/guardians will also be notified that any school meal debt accrued prior to the District's determination that the student is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch remains the parent's responsibility.

Twice per year, all households with negative student account balances of \$5 or more who no longer attend school in the District will be sent a warning letter/email indicating they have a negative balance and need to make prompt payment to Nutrition Services for all student account debts. If no payment arrangements are made, the District's collections process will be followed.

### **Collections**

In collecting student meal account debt, the District shall ensure that collection efforts do not have a negative impact on the student(s) involved and instead focus on the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases. The District will work with parents/guardians to establish payment plans with payment levels and due dates appropriate to the household's particular circumstances.

A final letter will be sent on accounts with negative balances of \$25 or more (\$5 or more for students no longer enrolled in the District) if no payment arrangements are made, notifying the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the account will be turned over to collections if payment arrangements are not made by the date specified in the letter. When an account is turned over to collections, costs and fees will be assessed in accordance with debt collection agency policies and applicable laws and regulations.

### **Bad Debt**

When a student meal account is less than \$5 in the negative and the student is no longer enrolled in the District, the District's bad debt procedure will be followed.

### **Free or Reduced-Price Meal Benefits**

Families are encouraged to complete an application for free or reduced-price meal benefits through the National School Lunch Program. The application is confidential and is only used to determine eligibility for free or reduced meal benefits. Only one application per family, per school-year is required. The application is available online and can be accessed through the District's website, or families may obtain a paper application from the school office. Families may contact the Nutrition Services Department at (303) 853-1117 with any questions.

### **Annual Notice**

The District shall notify students and their parents/guardians about this policy at the beginning of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to those students who transfer into the District during the school year. Information about this policy may also be included in student handbooks, student enrollment or registration packets, and/or back-to-school packets, and posted on District and school websites.

The District's Director of Nutrition Services is responsible for ensuring this policy is communicated to school and District-level staff responsible for this policy's enforcement.

*Approved April 19, 2019.*

### **LEGAL REFERENCES:**

USDA Guidance SP 46-2016 (*requires written policy regarding unpaid meal charges*)