Meal Charges

The District recognizes that students may forget or lose lunch money or may have an unpaid meal account balance. The District endeavors to treat all students with dignity regarding unpaid meal charges; however, unpaid meal charges create a significant financial burden for the District. To ensure that students do not go hungry but also minimize the financial burden, the District shall charge meals and collect on meal account charges in all schools consistent with this policy.

Students who are eligible to receive free meals do not have a meal account and, therefore, are not subject to this policy. Free lunch status students may pre-pay for or purchase a la carte items with cash.

Elementary and Middle School Students

Elementary and middle school students will pay for meals at the rate established by the District in accordance with federal and state law, which includes charging reduced rates to eligible students. Meals may be pre-paid by submitting payment (cash, check, or credit card) to the school office or cafeteria or by cash at the time of service. The District will not deny an elementary or middle school student a meal and will provide a regular meal if the student does not have a meal; however, the District will charge the meal to the student's account at the established rate. An elementary or middle school student will be permitted to charge up to twenty dollars ($20.00) if his or her meal account has a balance of zero. Once a student has reached a negative balance of twenty dollars ($20.00), the student will not be permitted to charge a la carte items, such as milk, but the school will offer the student with an alternate.

High School Students

High school students will pay for meals at the rate established by the District in accordance with federal and state law, which includes charging reduced rates to eligible students. Meals may be pre-paid by submitting payment (cash, check, or credit card) to the school office or cafeteria or by cash at the time of service. A high school student will be permitted to charge a maximum of five (5) meals if his or her meal account has a balance of zero. Once the student's account has been charged five (5) meals, the student or parents/guardians must submit payment for the meal account balance. If a student has reached the maximum meal account balance and no payment has been received, the student must have cash or a meal from home. The school will not provide an alternate meal for high school students who have reached the maximum meal account balance without payment.

Adults

Adults must pay the full cost of all meals purchased. Adults may pre-pay for meals, submit cash at the time of service, or charge up to five (5) meals.

Payment of Meal Account

Each school shall maintain regards regarding student meal balances. The District issues notices through an automated system every two weeks when a student's meal account has a balance of five dollars ($5) or more. The District issues notices every two weeks regarding meal account balances for elementary students and monthly regarding meal account balances for middle school students. Parents/guardians may also check a student meal account balance online through the District's student information system portal accessible through its website (http://www.thompsonfalls.net).

Parents/guardians must submit payment for meal accounts in person to the school office or cafeteria (by cash, check, or credit card), by mail to the District (206 Haley Ave. West) (by cash or check), or by phone (406-827-7190) (credit card only). Payment must be submitted thirty (30) days from the date of notice of balance. If the District has not received payment by the end of the school year, the payment is considered overdue and is a delinquent debt. The District will use reasonable efforts and as permitted by state and federal law to collect meal account balances which are delinquent debts, including payment plans as determined appropriate.

Legal References: 2 C.F.R. § 200.426
7 C.F.R. Part 210
7 C.F.R. § 245.5

Cross References: Board Policy 5232
Board Policy 8200

Policy History:
Adopted on: 2-1-2021
Revised on: