

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and that school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for a la carte items or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

III. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. If the school district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage below the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate via the Community Eligibility Provision must participate in the free school meals program.
- B. A school that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage at or above the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate must participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision in order to participate in the free school meals program.
- C. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:
 - (1) participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and
 - (2) provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.
 - (3) A student who has been determined eligible for free and reduced-price lunch must always be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt per Minn. Statute 124D.111 Subd. 1c
- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
- E. For the privilege of charging on the high school a la carte account. A student must have a permission slip from the parent/guardian on file, as well as a positive account balance.

- F. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the funds will be distributed evenly to each students' accounts. Funds will be transferred between sibling accounts; upon graduation, departure from school or other just means, as long as a written notice is received from the parent or guardian to do so.

IV. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance. Families will be notified by Linq Connect/Titan Meal System by automated calling system, email, letters sent home.
- C. Daily notifications will continue via automated phone call and/or email (depending on contact information given to school by family) until the family account has a positive balance.
- F. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing nonreimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

V. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Account balances over 180 days old will be turned over to a collection agency. Customers will be notified 30 days in advance that this action will be taken. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

E. Angel Fund Allocation Procedure

1. Funds donated to the District Angel Fund will be utilized in the order outlined below. As much as possible, the District will spend money donated to the Fund during the school year in which it was donated. Any funds donated from graduating seniors' positive meal accounts will be utilized the following school year.
 - a. Attempt to follow the wishes of the donor. Example: unpaid balances for certain school, certain family, certain grade, etc.

- b. Pay off meal debt from individuals who have been identified as homeless
- c. Pay off meal debt from families who are requesting help due to temporary financial difficulties
- d. Pay off meal debt from families who were approved for free or reduced-price meals
- e. Work with school social workers and administrators to identify students with significant needs and pay off meal debt. Preference will be given to families who have applied for free/reduced-price meals, but were denied
- f. If there are funds left over, the money is prorated among all remaining negative balances over -\$15.00.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district may post the policy on the school district’s website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

****This policy is in place of Policy 790 – Food Service Collection Procedure

*** This Policy has been changed from Unpaid meal charges to School Meals Policy as of 5/2024

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4
 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A
 Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14,2019) (letter to Ricker)

Adopted: 8/09

Revised: 9/16;10/18, 10/19, 12/22, 5/24