

## CHARGING SCHOOL MEALS

The goal of the East Ramapo Central School District is to provide students access to nutritious meals each day.

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may not have enough funds for a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the District, the Board will allow students who do not have enough funds to “charge” the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms of this policy.

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

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, excluding extras, à la carte items, and snacks;
2. limit the number of charges to five (5) breakfast and five (5) lunch meals per student after their account balance reaches zero. However, any student with charged meals remaining unpaid at the end of the school year may not charge meals in the next school year until the previous charges are paid; and
3. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals as well as collects repayments.

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 “à la carte” transactions, as a section on the daily cash report or deposit summary reads “charges paid.”

Students who have reached the limit of charged meals may be offered an alternate meal of the District’s choosing which meets the nutritional requirements of the reimbursable meal at a cost equivalent to the regular meal. The District shall take into consideration extenuating circumstances. The cost of the alternate meal shall be added to the student’s account. The District shall strive to offer alternate meals as discretely as possible, before a student obtains a regular meal.

Students eligible for free meals shall not be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases. No student with unpaid charges will be prohibited from purchasing food if they have money that day.

The District shall discretely notify parents/guardians of student account balances on a regular basis. When a student’s account balance falls to \$0.00, and whenever a meal is charged, the District will discretely notify the student and the parent/guardian of the balance, the process to refill the account, and the District’s policy on charging school meals and alternate meals. This notification will continue regularly until the account is replenished. The District shall contact parents/guardians to help resolve the unpaid balances and to offer assistance through

the appropriate resources (school counselors, social workers, family resource centers, etc.) to determine whether the family may be eligible for free or reduced price lunches.

A student may be prohibited from charging meals if there is an abuse of the meal charge privilege. In this case, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian that if he/she continues to abuse this policy, the privilege of charging meals will be refused. However before denying any student a meal, school food authorities shall carefully consider the negative consequences of such an action. Refusing very young children or students with disabilities is prohibited by the Board.

The District shall send a letter home to all parents/guardians 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 District publications.

#### *Unpaid Meal Charges and Debt Collection*

Unpaid meal charges are a financial burden to the District and taxpayers and can negatively affect the school program. Unpaid meal charges shall be considered "in arrears" as per the District's accounting practices. Parents/guardians must repay all unpaid charges remaining at the end of the year or before their child leaves the District, whichever occurs first. The District shall attempt to recover unpaid meal charges before the end of the school year, but may continue efforts into the next school year. Unpaid balances shall be carried over into the next school year. Students with unpaid meal charges at the start of the year will not be able to charge meals, but will be provided with an alternate meal as per this policy until all unpaid charges are repaid. The District shall notify parents/guardians of unpaid meal charges at regular intervals, and may engage in collection activities. The District shall offer repayment plans, and may take other actions that do not result in harm or shame to the child, until unpaid charges are paid.

#### *Account Balances*

Remaining funds shall be carried over to the next school year. When students leave the District or graduate, the District will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to return remaining funds. Parents/guardians may request that funds be transferred to other students (e.g., siblings, unpaid accounts). All transfer requests must be in writing. Unclaimed funds remaining after ninety (90) days shall be absorbed by the school meal account.

#### *Staff*

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the District's food services. Adult meal prices will be established in accordance with Child Nutrition Program regulations. All purchases must be on a cash basis. Staff members will not be allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Cross-ref: 8520, Free and Reduced Price Meal Services

Ref: 42 USC §1779 (Child Nutrition Act of 1966)  
42 USC §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a) (National School Lunch Act)  
2 CFR §200.426 (accounting for debt in federal programs)

7 CFR §§210.9 210.12; 210.19; 220.13; 245.5 (accounting in federal school meal programs)

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296), §143

USDA Report to Congress, *Review of Local Policies on Meal Charges and Provision of Alternate Meals*, June 2016, [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf)

*Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies*, USDA FNS Memo SP 46-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies](http://www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies)

*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 57-2016 (09/16/16), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP57-2016os.pdf>

*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 23-2017 (03/23/17), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP23-2017os.pdf>

*Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments*, USDA FNS Memo SP 47-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf)

*Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge - Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools*, USDA FNS Guidance Document (May 2017), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP29-2017a1.pdf>

*Student Meal Charge Policy*, NYSED Guidance Memo, (5/30/17), <http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/student-meal-charge-policy>

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