

Child Nutrition Account Balance

No adult employees may carry a negative balance in their meal balance account. Adults must prepay.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children have food. Parents are not to carry a negative balance in their children's meal account. Parents may apply for free or reduced meals or work with the Child Nutrition Department to pay off debt. Parents who wish to eat a school meal with their child(ren) must prepay in the office.

All families new to BPS will be given the opportunity to complete a meal application for reduced-price meals.

Students will receive a menu-reimbursable meal, regardless of account balance. A la carte items may be purchased only when the account has a positive balance; there is no charging of a la carte. If a la carte items are charged, it is the parent's responsibility to pay for these items.

Parents are responsible for monitoring their children's meal accounts and ensuring a credit balance. The District makes efforts to assist parents with their responsibility. The following protocol will be used:

1. **Negative Balance Notification:** Parents will receive a text and email message on Tuesdays and Fridays until debt has been paid.
2. **Collection Agency (-\$100 or greater):** Collections will be handled by the Child Nutrition Department up to two times per year. An invoice will be issued as a final notice prior to the account being turned over to collections. The method of distribution, whether by email or mail, will be determined at the discretion of the Child Nutrition Department.
3. **Staff Intervention:** Along with the automated notifications, a school may call or send a negative student balance letter to families to inform them of their low/negative balance. Negative letters may be emailed or mailed. Households may be requested to meet with a school official, such as the principal, social worker, or counselor for resolution.

The Child Nutrition Department occasionally receives donations to assist with covering negative lunch balances. When allocating these funds, the department prioritizes students in the following order:

1. Students who qualify for free meals.
2. Students who qualify for reduced-price meals.
3. Students who qualify for state-free meals.
4. Students who qualify for paid meals.

For families who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals, the department is willing to set up a payment plan. These plans may be matched with donation funds, provided sufficient resources are available.

The child nutrition department recognizes that unexpected circumstances can sometimes result in families falling behind on meal payments. In such cases, the department will collaborate closely with the schools to assess whether a student with a paid meal status qualifies for assistance through donation funds.

Families are strongly encouraged to complete a meal application if donation funds are used to pay off a negative balance.

Text and email notifications will continue until the meal balance is paid, and the student's account no longer reflects a negative amount. If the debt is ultimately deemed uncollectible, the school district will assume responsibility for covering the outstanding meal debt per USDA regulations.

As permitted by USDA, school officials may certify families for free meals. School officials should refer to [these](#) guidelines before certifying families. If a household member applied for meal benefits and was denied based on income, a school official cannot certify the student(s) for free meals per USDA regulations.

Families of returning students will see positive meal balances rolled forward into their child's/ren's meal account(s) for the next year. Families that leave BPS will receive a refund of the remaining balance in their meal account if requested unless they wish to donate the funds. Requests for refunds must be received by June 10 of the recently completed school year or within two weeks of the student(s) leaving the District, whichever comes first. For graduating seniors, any positive meal account balance exceeding \$10.00 will be refunded via check unless otherwise directed by the student or family. Balances of less than \$10.00 will be donated to assist families with negative meal balances unless a request for a refund is submitted to the school office by June 10th. Any money left in inactive accounts will be donated to help families with negative balances in their meal accounts.