

## RSU #63

- a. **NEPN/NSBA Code:** EFCA
- b. **Title:** RSU #63 Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program
- c. **Author:** Superintendent/Budget & Finance Committee
- d. **Replaces Policy:**
- e. **Date Approved:** 12/14/2020 RSU #63
- f. **Previously Approved:** 08/28/2017
- g. **Policy Expiration:** Review as Needed
- h. **Responsible for Review:** Superintendent/Budget & Finance Committee/Policy Committee
- i. **Date Reviewed:** 07/26/2017 Budget & Finance Committee  
12/03/2020 Policy Committee  
12/03/2020 Superintendent
- j. **References:** Policies: EFC - Food Services Program  
EFC-R - Administrative Procedures Relating to  
RSU 63's Free & Reduced-Price Meal Program
- k. **Narrative**

Studies prove that children are more successful in a school if they receive appropriate nutritional meals throughout the day. To that end, the District participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSL) administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and overseen by the Maine Department of Education, Child Nutrition Services. Proper nutrition is essential for growing bodies and assists students in reaching their full academic and physical potential.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure his/her student has access to proper nutrition. However, the District is well aware that many District families have difficulties providing many of life's basic necessities. To assist the students of these families, the District provides a Free or Reduced-Price Meal Program for those who qualify. The meal program provides breakfast and lunch for Pre-K through eighth grade students during school days.

- I. To qualify a student for free or reduced-price meals, the parent/guardian only needs to complete a "Free and Reduced Lunch School Meal Application" which is available through the office of the student's school principal or the District's Business Manager. Eligibility criteria are available through the District's website ([www.rsu63.org](http://www.rsu63.org)), the student handbook, and information provided to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year. All information provided on the form is held in strict confidence.
- II. In accordance with the guidelines for participation in these programs, and the wishes of the Board, no student will be denied a lunch or other food simply because proper application has not been received from his/her parent/guardian.
- III. Free or reduced-priced lunches may be provided to students of families whose yearly income does not fall within the eligibility guidelines if the following steps are taken to establish the need of the students:

- A. At the beginning of the school year, the parents/guardians of all students will receive written information about the District's School Meal Program. Within these materials will be a "Free and Reduced Lunch School Meal Application". It is the sincere hope of the Board that those families who meet the eligibility criteria for Free and Reduced-Price meals will complete and return the form as directed which will ensure confidentiality.
  - B. If a completed "Free and Reduced Lunch School Meal Application" is not received from a family with a student(s) believed to be eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, the school lunch accountability person will attempt to contact the family in writing, by phone, or via the SchoolMaster program after conferring with the school principal or Business Manager. The Food Services Director will make the contact if it is determined that students from the same family attend more than one school in the District. Families will be advised of the availability of free and/or reduced-price meals at the school and their child's possible eligibility in accordance with the policy. Families will be directed to the District website to read policies that pertain to their situation or hard copies may be mailed to the family to encourage them to apply on behalf of their students' academic welfare. Long-term health and improved academic performance through good nutrition will be stressed.
  - C. The school lunch accountability person will contact the family of any student to whom meals have been served for one week without appropriate payment. Contact will be in writing, by phone or the SchoolMaster program and will include a "Due Date" for the outstanding balance. The family will be advised of the means of payment as defined in Policy EFC, Section VIII, and to provide a "bag lunch" for their student if they do not pay the outstanding balance or choose not to participate in the Free or Reduced Lunch program.
  - D. Following the first contact by the school lunch accountability person, the Business Manager will be provided with the name of the student, the financial status of unpaid meals, the means and date of contact with the student's family, and the "Due Date of the outstanding balance. The Business Manager will notify the appropriate school personnel when/if the outstanding balance is paid and/or application for free or reduced lunch is received.
  - E. The school lunch accountability person will notify the Food Services Director if it is determined the parent is not providing payment for meals served nor a bag lunch for the student. The Food Services Director will contact the family in writing to document the problem.
  - F. The school Principal and Food Services Director will determine any need for the child to receive free meals, even if the parent/guardian has not filed a Free and Reduced Lunch School Meal Application, and will document that decision. If done, such meals will be claimed for reimbursement according to State guidelines.
- IV. No student will be denied food as a disciplinary measure. No student from Pre-K through eighth grade, whose parent/guardian wants them to receive school meal, will be denied food, even if the student's account is negative.

- V. Meals must always be provided to students in grades Pre-K through eighth grade, to any student with disability who may be unable to take full responsibility for the debts they may have created, as well as any student known to qualify for free lunch.
- VI. For students who have an outstanding balance for school meals and whose parent/guardian has not provided appropriate payment by a specific date:
- A. The school lunch accountability person will advise the school Principal of any student to whom meals have been served for one week without appropriate payment. The school Principal will contact the family of the student in writing, by phone, or the SchoolMaster program and will include a “Due Date” for the outstanding balance. The parent/guardian will be advised of the means of payment as defined in Policy EFC, Section VIII, and to provide a “bag lunch” for their student until they pay the outstanding balance. If appropriate, the parent/guardian should be encouraged to reconsider applying for the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program if they have not already done so. The school lunch accountability person should offer to send a Free and Reduced Lunch School Meal Application to the parent/guardian and reiterate that all information received is confidential.
  - B. Within one school day following the first contact by the school lunch accountability person, the school Principal and the Business Manager will be provided with the name of the student, the financial status of unpaid meals, the means and date of contact with the student’s parent/guardian, and the “Due Date” set for payment of the outstanding balance. The Food Services Director will notify the appropriate school personnel when/if the outstanding balance is paid and/or application for free or reduced-priced lunch is received.
  - C. The school lunch accountability person will notify the Food Service Director if it is determined the parent is not providing payment for the Reduced-Price meals served to the student nor a bag lunch for the student. The Food Services Director will contact the family in writing to document the problem.
  - D. The administration’s efforts to collect on overdue accounts will conform to the following guidelines:
    - 1. Less than \$25 debt in one household: informal communications to household
    - 2. \$25-\$50 in one household: formal written notice
    - 3. \$50-\$100: registered notice
    - 4. When, on July 1, a household owes more than \$200 for students under its guardianship, the administration may pursue any means of legal collection.
    - 5. In all cases, the administration will assist households to document eligibility for free or reduced meals and offer to provide information of charities that may be willing to assist by providing food or funds. All school meal personnel will

handle debt situations with as much privacy and respect as possible. All free and reduced meal status information is strictly confidential.

- VII.** The district will make a reasonable attempt to collect unpaid balances at the end of the school year. It also reserves the right to utilize outside collection services for balances exceeding \$50.00. Students will not be allowed to charge meals at the start of the new academic year if there is an unpaid balance from the previous year. There will be a \$25.00 fee charged on returned checks. Cash only or on-line payment may be requested of families who pay by checks that were returned for insufficient funds more than two times in a school year.
- VIII.** The Superintendent is responsible for the development of the process, procedure, and regulations necessary to implementing this policy.