

New Lothrop Area Public Schools



Nutritional Services Department

“Working together to nourish the minds and bodies of our future.”

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

The purpose of having a meal charging policy is to establish consistent clear meal account procedures throughout the district. There is a fine line between considering the fiscal integrity of the district and the solvency of the food service program while also meeting the nutritional needs of students.

Goals:

- To ensure that students have a healthy meal and that no child goes hungry.
- To treat all students with dignity and confidentiality in the serving line.
- To foster clear positive communication among staff, administrators, teachers, students and parents/guardians.
- To establish fair practices that can be used consistently throughout the district regarding meal charges and the collection of charges.
- To encourage parents/guardians to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of their child/student.

Scope of Responsibility:

The Nutrition Department

- Responsible for maintaining meal account records.
- Responsible for notifying the student’s parent/guardian with phone calls or written documentation when the student is close to their credit limit.
- Responsible for working with households toward a reasonable resolution.

The Parent/Guardian

- **Responsible for immediate payment.**

Meal Accounts:

We strongly discourage meal charges, but understand that it occasionally happens. Meal charges are a temporary solution and are not intended to address broader issues of a parent/guardian’s inability to pay for a meal for his/her child. In those instances, an application for Free or Reduced Meal Benefits should be completed. Free and reduced Meal Applications are available at both school offices and on the district website. Free and reduced applications need to be filled out yearly.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to make meal payments in advance. Personal checks and cash deposits are accepted at the student's home school. For convenience, deposits may also be made by credit/debit card after setting up an account for the student by filling out the attached form.

When login into a student's food service account, parents/guardians can access cafeteria purchases and account balances at any time. Lunchroom cashiers will verbally notify students at the register when their meal account balance is low.

Meal Charging Policy:

Although not required by law through the National School Lunch Act or the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, limited meal charging will be allowed, as a courtesy to Families, under the following conditions:

Elementary School Students:

- Only reimbursable meals may be charged.
- Students may charge any combination of meals (breakfast and lunch) up to \$20.00. The student will not receive a meal if you exceed this amount.
- When a student charges a meal, their balance becomes a negative balance. Repayment is expected for all charged meals.
- Students are not permitted to purchase ala carte items or milk if they have a negative balance.
- NO CHARGING will be permitted 2 weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- Parents will not be able to chaperone a field trip if you carry a negative balance over \$20.00 until a payment plan is in place and approved by The Food Service Director.
- All unpaid charges must be paid at the end of the school year. Payments must be made in full to the Nutritional Services Department.

Middle & High School Students:

- Only reimbursable meals may be charged.
- Students may charge any combination of meals (breakfast and lunch) up to \$20.00. If the student exceeds this amount they will not receive a meal.
- When a student charges a meal, their balance becomes a negative balance. Repayment is expected for all charged meals.
- Students are not permitted to purchase ala carte items or milk if they have a negative balance.
- NO CHARGING will be permitted 2 weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- Participating in athletics is a privilege not a right: you will not be able to participate if you carry a negative balance over \$20.00 until a payment plan is in place and approved by **The Athletic Director and The Food Service Director**.
- All unpaid charges must be paid at the end of the school year. Payments must be made in full to the Nutrition Service Department.

Shaming:

- Our intention will never be to embarrass the student and to handle negative balance discreetly and respectfully.
- An alternate meal will not be offered to any child regardless of their ability to pay.
- We will not require a student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes a negative balance to wear a wristband or handstamp.
- We will not require a student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes a negative balance to perform chores or other work to pay for school meals.

- We will not dispose of a student’s meal after it has been served if they are unable to pay or have a negative balance.
- We will not have direct communication with a student about a negative balance unless our district has unsuccessfully attempted to contact the student’s parent or legal guardian first through telephone, mail and electronic mail.
- We will not discuss negative balance with a student in the presence of other students.
- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make sure there are funds in their student’s food service account.

Meal Prices 2025-26:

| Building | Breakfast | Lunch |
|----------------------|-----------|--------|
| Elementary School | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Middle & High School | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Adult | \$3.00 | \$5.25 |
| Milk | \$0.50 | \$0.50 |

Non-Sufficient Funds:

A returned check will result in a \$10.00 fee added to the student’s Food Service Account.

Seniors:

Negative food balances must be paid off by May 22nd. Any remaining positive balance will be transferred to siblings remaining in the school district. If the senior has no siblings a check (over \$5.00) will be made out to the parent listed in the Food Service system. If the amount is \$5.00 or lower the balance will go into our District Angel Fund, which helps families in need pay for their child’s meal.

Leaving our district:

Once notified of your student leaving our district, a check (over \$5.00) will be mailed to the parent listed in the Food Service system. If the amount is \$5.00 or lower the balance will go into our District Angel Fund, which helps families in need pay for their child’s meal.

Low & Overdue Balances:

The following ways are how you will be notified:

- Email
- Letter
- Phone call, from Food Service Staff.

We encourage you to sign up for online access to help monitor the students spending, so please provide us that information on the attached return sheet.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Valerie Baker at (810) 638-5054 ext. 2289 or via email vbaker@newlothrop.k12.mi.us.

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I have read and reviewed the Meal Charging Policy with my student and by signing this document agree to the policies and am fully aware of the new changes for the school year. **Please fill one out per family, listing all your school age children on the back of this form.**

- Only reimbursable meals may be charged.
- Students may charge any combination of meals (breakfast and lunch) up to \$20.00. If the student exceeds this amount they will not receive a meal.
- When a student charges a meal, their balance becomes a negative balance. Repayment is expected for all charged meals.
- Students are not permitted to purchase ala carte items or milk if they have a negative balance.
- NO CHARGING will be permitted 2 weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- Parents will not be able to chaperone a field trip if you carry a negative balance over \$20.00 until a payment plan is in place and approved by **The Food Service Director**.
- Participating in athletics is a privilege not a right: you will not be able to participate if you carry a negative balance over \$20.00 until a payment plan is in place and approved by The Athletic Director and The Food Service Director.
- All unpaid charges must be paid at the end of the school year. Payments must be made in full to the Nutritional Service Department.

Printed parent or guardian's name

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

***Please fill out both sides and return by September 12, 2025**