

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

PURPOSE

While meal charging is strongly discouraged, it is understood that it occasionally happens. Meal charges are a temporary solution. The purpose of the meal charging policy is to establish clear and consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. As a result of these standards, compliance with federal reporting requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program is maintained. Further, oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances will positively impact the fiscal integrity of the district and the financial solvency of the Plymouth-Canton Nutrition Services Department while meeting the nutritional needs of students.

GOALS

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

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Nutrition Department:

- Responsible for ensuring that all students have equitable access to meals and are nourished ready to succeed in school
- Responsible for maintaining meal account records.
- Responsible for notifying the student’s parent/guardian with phone calls or written documentation after the credit limit has been reached.
- Responsible for working with households toward a reasonable resolution

Parent/Guardian:

- Responsible for immediate payment.

District Business Office:

- Responsible for handling and management of inactive unpaid balances and bad debt
- Responsible for collection of debt remaining beyond Food Service Department’s allowable collection period

ELIMINATION OF MEAL SHAMING

This Meal Charging Policy will prevent lunch shaming, as defined and outlined in State Aid Section 31k through the following standards:

- Prohibits the requirement of students who cannot pay for a school meal or who owe a negative balance to wear a wristband or handstamp.
- Prohibits the requirement of students who cannot pay for a school meal or who owe a negative balance to perform chores or other work to pay for school meals.
- Discourages the denial of a meal or alternative meal being served as a result of unpaid meal debt
- Prohibits the requiring of students to dispose of a meal after it has been served because the student is unable to pay for the meal or has a negative balance
- Prohibits the direct communication with a student about a negative balance unless our district(s) have unsuccessfully attempted to contact the student's parent or legal guardian first through telephone, mail, and electronic mail
- Prohibits discussing a negative balance with a student in the presence of other students.

MEAL ACCOUNTS:

The District uses MiStar computerized meal credit system to account for student meals and a la carte sales. All students have personal accounts regardless of paying status (free, reduced or full pay). Each student has a school ID number which stays with them for their duration in the Plymouth Canton Community Schools.

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 in MiStar ParentConnection under the "Cafeteria" tab. Cafeteria purchase history and account balances are visible at any time in this system. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to regularly check Cafeteria balances in MiStar ParentConnection and/or set up a notification of Cafeteria balance by selecting "Email Signup" in the top navigation bar within MiStar ParentConnection.

MEAL PRICES

- Full-Priced Meals: All meals will be purchased at the identified and published amount for the school year unless a student is qualified as eligible for a free or reduced meal benefit.
- Applications are available online at <https://sisweb.resa.net/FSApp/default.aspx?id=82100> or in the cafeteria, the school office, and on the district [Food and Nutrition website](#).
 - Free Meal Benefit: Students identified as eligible to receive free meals will be allowed to receive one (1) free reimbursable breakfast and lunch each day. Additional meals and additional items must be purchased at the full-price rate and be paid for utilizing their meal account balance or through cash payment at the point of sale during scheduled meal time.
 - Reduced-Price Meal Benefit: Students identified as eligible to receive meals at a reduced price will be allowed to receive one (1) reimbursable breakfast at a cost of \$0.30 and one (1) reimbursable lunch at a cost of \$0.40 each day. Additional meals and additional items must be purchased at the full-price rate and be paid for utilizing their meal account balance or through cash payment at the point of sale during scheduled meal time.

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 for students only, as a courtesy to families, under the following conditions:

- Meal charging is a courtesy to families, up to a total of five (5) meals (breakfast and/or lunch) but should not be seen as a line of credit.
- When a student charges a meal, their meal balance becomes a negative balance.
- Only reimbursable meals may be charged by students.
- A la carte, second entrees, and extra items **cannot** be charged. Students are not permitted to purchase ala carte items if they have a zero OR negative account balance.

Charging by adults (district employees [non Food Services], volunteers, or visitors) is not permitted under any circumstances. This is a violation of federal law as federal Non-Profit Food Service Fund monies are only allowable for use in the delivery of student meals.

COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT DEBT:

- Families are notified via email regarding account balances regularly directly from the MISTAR account from MISTAR Notification <parentportal@pccsk12.com>
- In the event of a negative balance, families will be notified by an email from healthy.meals@pccsk12.com
- After a second notice of debt to the family, the building administration/building principal is notified of the situation.
- Repayment is expected for all charged meals.
- All unpaid charges will be added to the list of any outstanding fees or unpaid fines at the end of the school year. Payment must be made in full to the Nutrition Service Department*

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION:

The Food Service Department will provide notice to all parents on an annual basis prior to the opening day of school, outlining the requirements of this regulation. The regulation shall also be published in an appropriate school-based publication

REFUNDS & BALANCE TRANSFERS

With a written or emailed request to the Food Service Department students who leave the district or are graduating and have a positive account balance on their account can request a refund or can transfer any remaining funds to a sibling's account.

- Account balances must be requested within 60 days of the account becoming inactive.
- Inactive student accounts with a balance of \$25.00 or more will follow the State of Michigan's manual for reporting unclaimed property. All other accounts, after a good faith effort to refund, will be transferred to the Angel Fund which provides financial assistance to students who are unable to pay negative account balances.
- ***High School Students: Grades, report cards, diplomas, walking at graduation and other privileges may be withheld if payment in full is not received. Please see district policy for bad debt.**

Revised: 9.23.2025