



OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

ISD 197 School Board

Students

Contact: Director of Operations

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for a la carte or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Independent School District 197 participates in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program, and therefore all enrolled students will be offered one breakfast and one lunch at no charge while at school regardless of any outstanding child nutrition account balance. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.
- B. Each student has their own child nutrition account in which parents may deposit money for a la carte or second meal purchases. Payment to accounts may be made at a student's individual school with a personal check or cash. Personal checks or cash amounts may also be made at the District Child Nutrition Office for individual or multiple students, attending any district school, with a noted designation of how the money is to be divided.
- C. The district's online payment system allows parents to make payments to their child's meal account. Parents or guardians also have the ability to view account balance, payments made, and purchase history for their child. Confirmation of payments and low balance reminders are emailed to parents or guardians. An auto-replenish feature is also available, which deposits funds into their child's account when it reaches a specified low balance. Parents or guardians need not make deposits via the online payment system in order to register an account to receive low-balance reminders and view a student's purchase history.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when child nutrition account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Parents will receive a negative balance notification when their child's account balance drops below \$0.00. Parents will be notified of low balances by email, US Mail, and/or an automated calling system.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding child nutrition account balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a food item that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing non-reimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid child nutrition account charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances greater than \$50.00, not paid prior to the end of the month in which the \$50.00 threshold is reached, will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student child nutrition account balances. The school district will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student child nutrition account balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in the School District Family Handbook which is distributed to:
 - 1. all households before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district will post this policy on the school district’s website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References:

Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
 Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A

POLICY ADOPTED:

August 7, 2017

POLICY REVIEWED/REVISED:

December 18, 2017; March 15, 2021; March 17, 2025; September 22, 2025

Monitoring Method:

Administrative Review

Monitoring Frequency:

Once every three years