

TRUMBULL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SECTION: **3000**
CATEGORY: **Business & Non-Instructional Operations**
POLICY CODE: **3542.43/Food Charging**

FOOD CHARGING

Policy Statement

As the District's participates in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal.

To facilitate payment in advance for school meals, the Board has established a payment program whereby parents/guardians may pay for meals in advance either by cash or check or through the MySchoolBucks program at www.myschoolbucks.com. Additional information about payment methods can be obtained through the Director of the Food Services Department, through each school's Food Service Manager, or through the Trumbull Public Schools Food Services website. If a parent/guardian chooses to send in one payment to be distributed amongst sibling accounts enrolled in the same school, the parent/guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed amongst the sibling accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission from the parent/guardian is received by the Director of the Food Services Department.

No child shall be denied a school meal due to lack of payment; however, the regulations set forth in this policy shall be followed whenever a child does not have sufficient cash or sufficient funds in his/her school meal account.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the Director of the Food Services Department, the applicable school's Food Service Manager, or the applicable school's principal for assistance. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced-price meals to apply for such.

The Board recognizes that funds from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.

Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults (teachers, staff, and visitors). Adults are not allowed to charge meals, and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households with students transferring into the District during the school year. The policy shall also be provided in writing to all school staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the District's educational liaison for homeless children and youths, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges shall be informed of this policy.

Adopted: 5/23/2017
Revised: 6/4/2024

References

- United States Department of Agriculture SP 46-2016, 47-2016, 57-2016, 58-2016
- Connecticut General Statutes §§ 10-215, 10-215a, 10-215b
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 3542.31: Free and Reduced-Price Meals

Regulations

1. If a student's meal account falls below the value of zero dollars (\$0.00) at the student's school, the school's Food Service Manager shall e-mail the student's parent/guardian and/or send home a reminder letter with the student, reminding the parent/guardian to deposit funds into the student's meal account.
2. If a student's meal account balance becomes negative, the school's Food Service Manager shall within 5 school days contact the parent/guardian by telephone, e-mail, or reminder letter given to the student, reminding the parent/guardian to deposit funds into the student's meal account.
3. If a student's meal account balance becomes negative, no charging of snack items, a-la-carte items, ice cream, or anything else outside of the typical reimbursable meal profile will be allowed.
4. The District prohibits publicly identifying or shaming a child for any such unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such child, designating a specific meal option for such child (such as offering a cheese sandwich as an "emergency meal,") or otherwise taking a disciplinary action against a child.
5. The student has a right to obtain a meal, which may exclude any a la carte items or be limited to one meal for any lunch, breakfast, or other meal service. Adult meal/a la carte charging is unallowable.
6. If a student's meal account reaches a negative balance of -\$20.00, an email, text, or phone message is sent to the parent/guardian. An additional communication from the building principal and/or his designee reminding the parent/guardian of:
 - The need to deposit funds into the student's meal account; and
 - The free or reduced-price meal application information regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), such as the Connecticut State Department of Education's Addendum C: Information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and
 - Contact information for local food pantries; and
 - A link to the town's website listing any community services available to the residents of the town- <https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/310/Food-Pantry>.
7. The District's efforts to recover from a household's money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved, and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases.
 - If unpaid meal charges equal or exceed 30 meals, the District must refer the parent/guardian to the homeless liaison.
 - Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered "delinquent debt," as defined by federal and state statutes, as long as it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30 of each school year. After the debt is reclassified as "bad debt," such debt shall be written off as an operating loss not to be absorbed by the non-profit school food service account, but must be restored using non- federal funds.

8. The District will provide training for principals and food service staff responsible for communicating and enforcing this policy through onboarding and regular cycles of professional development as needed.