



Policy Statement

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work and also minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a financial burden on the school district as food services is a self-supporting function within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide operational guidance regarding the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

Meal Charges and Balances

Students will pay for meals at a rate approved by the School Committee based on their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. Payment options will be delineated in student handbooks and provided to parents of incoming students. After their balance reaches zero or goes negative, no student will be denied a single, reimbursable lunch meal and/or single reimbursable breakfast meal at school (a la carte items/snacks that are not part of the USDA program are not included). The student will still be allowed to take a meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the appropriate rate based on their meal status. Parents/guardians are responsible for any meal charges incurred, therefore no student will be made aware of a negative meal account balance in the checkout process. They will be neither singled out nor treated in any different way from students with positive meal account balances.

Payments

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. The parents/guardians of any student whose account is in arrears will be contacted by the Food Services Director or his/her designee so that the parents/guardians may bring the account up to date. Various and multiple forms of communications will be used in the case of any account still in arrears after 10 days with no resolution. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parent/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact food services for assistance. If there is a financial hardship, parents/guardians should contact the Food Services department to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan. If financial hardship exists, parents/guardians are also encouraged to apply for free or reduced price meals for their child.

Refunds

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted.

Policy Communications

This policy shall be included in each school handbook and shall be communicated to families entering the district during the year. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for applying for free or reduced-price meals.

LEGAL REFS: MGL [71:72](#); USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017

CROSS REFS: EF (Food Services); EFC (Free and Reduced Price Food Services)

School Committee Date Adopted Changes: August 1, 2018