

FOOD SERVICE POLICY

MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services strives to be a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program and provide guidance specific to unpaid meal balances.

The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced school meals only. The School Committee will provide a regular meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.

Meal Charges and Balances

Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee and for 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 the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items including but not limited to a second entrée, snack, ice cream, or an additional beverage. The student will still be allowed to take a meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

Payments

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email. If account balances remain unpaid, a notice will be mailed to the parents indicating that they have an outstanding balance that needs to be paid. If balances remain unpaid, parents will receive a phone call from the food services department. If the phone call does not result in payment the food service manager shall turn the account over to the business office. 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 concerns with student purchases, they should contact food services for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks, Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year. All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status.

Refunds

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, or postal) for a refund of any money remaining in their account. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate remaining funds to a student upon submission of a written request.

Delinquent Accounts/Collections

Failure of a parent or guardian to maintain reasonably current accounts may result in a referral to the Superintendent for his/her review. The Superintendent/Designate shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

Policy Communications

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

LEGAL REFS: MGL 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017 CROSS REFS: JQ, Student Fees, Fines & Charges

SOURCE: MASC February 2018

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