

SUPPORT SERVICES

Payment for Charged Food Purchases

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of the school nutrition program, as well as individual school budgets.

The intent of this regulation is to establish a Divisionwide process to handle situations when students eligible for reduced price or full price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals; as well as for the collection of unpaid meal charges and delinquent account debt.

I. Procedures for Charging Meals at Elementary Schools

- A. Students who reach the cashier in the cafeteria without money for their meals will be allowed charging privileges. Students are only allowed to charge reimbursable meals. They are not permitted to charge snack items, additional servings, or second meals. All charged meals will be provided by the cafeteria and recorded in the computerized point of sale (POS) system.
- B. Students will be allowed to charge \$100.00. If the principal has information regarding the family situation and wishes to extend charge privileges beyond that amount, they may do so.
- C. When a paid student reaches the \$100.00 charge limit, the school principal will notify the parent/guardian that the student has exhausted their charge privileges. If a meal is needed, the student will be provided an alternate meal of juice and a cereal bar. The school principal, or administrative designee, will notify the classroom teacher of any student who is to receive the alternate meal. Prior to taking the student to the cafeteria for meal service, the teacher will check to see if the student has a packed meal or money for a meal. If the student does not have a home-packed meal or money for a meal, the student will be sent to the office for the alternate meal of juice and a cereal bar provided by Food Services. If an oversight occurs and the student gets in the cafeteria line with a tray, the meal will be charged. Meals will not be taken from elementary-age children.

II. Procedures for Charging Meals at Middle Schools

- A. Students who reach the cashier in the cafeteria without money for their meals will be allowed charging privileges. Students are only allowed to charge reimbursable meals. They are not permitted to charge snack items, additional servings, or second meals. All charged meals will be provided by the cafeteria and recorded in the computerized POS system.

- B. Students will be allowed to charge \$75.00. If the principal has information regarding the family situation and wishes to extend charge privileges beyond that amount, they may do so.
- C. When a paid student has reached the \$75.00 charge limit, the school principal, or administrative designee, will notify the parent/guardian that the student has exhausted their charge privileges and if further meals are needed, the student will be provided an alternate meal of juice and a cereal bar. The school principal will notify the food service manager in writing that this contact has been made.
- D. At that time, the student's POS record will be flagged to notify the cashier this student will no longer be allowed charge privileges. The student reaching the cashier without money will be denied their meal and given an alternate meal of juice and a cereal bar, provided by Food Services.

III. Procedures for Charging Meals at High Schools

- A. Students who reach the cashier in the cafeteria without money for their meals will be allowed charging privileges. Students are only allowed to charge reimbursable meals. They are not permitted to charge snack items, additional servings, or second meals. All charged meals will be provided by the cafeteria and recorded in the computerized POS system.
- B. Students will be allowed to charge \$50.00. If the principal has information regarding the family situation and wishes to extend charge privileges beyond that amount, they may do so.
- C. When a paid student has reached the \$50.00 charge limit, the school principal, or administrative designee, will notify the parent/guardian that the student has exhausted their charge privileges and will be denied further meals. The school principal will notify the food service manager in writing that this contact has been made.
- D. At that time, the student's POS record will be flagged to notify the cashier this student will no longer be allowed charge privileges. The student reaching the cashier without money will be denied their meal and given an alternate meal of juice and a cereal bar, provided by Food Services.

IV. Communication of Charge Policy to School Staff and Parents/Guardians

- A. The PWCS policy for charging meals will be posted on the Office of School Food and Nutrition Services (SFNS) website in the required languages and will be included in the "Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application Packet" that is distributed to all households at the beginning of the school year and to the households of all students entering PWCS after that point.

- B. The charge policy and regulation will be reviewed with all SFNS managers and cashiers at in-services at the beginning of each school year.
 - C. The charge policy and regulation will be reviewed with school principals at Level meetings at the beginning of each school year.
- V. Notifying the Household of Low or Negative Balance in Student Food Service Accounts
- A. Every Friday, food service managers will provide to the school principal a negative balance list of charges over \$10.00. On a daily basis, food service managers will provide principals the names of students who have reached the charge limit.
 - B. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to utilize www.MySchoolBucks.com, a website service available to parents/guardians to manage their student's food service account. Parents/guardians can log in to the site to check their child's lunch account balance, meal history, and make payments on their account with a credit card. They can also sign up for email notification when their student's account balance is low.
 - C. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each week, SFNS will send out automated telephone calls, text messages, and emails (using School Messenger) to any household with students who have a negative balance. These contacts will be ongoing until the debt is paid.
 - D. Local school personnel including the food service manager, as well as the school principal and/or designees, will use personal telephone calls to collect the charges owed.
 - E. Food service managers at elementary schools will print weekly notices for parents/guardians for each student with a negative balance. They will be given to classroom teachers to give to students to take home.
 - F. At the end of each month, food service managers will print notices for parents/guardians for each student with a negative balance of \$20.00 or more to be mailed to the households via US Mail. Any letters returned for change of address will be given to the school office, to be researched, corrected, and mailed.
 - G. SFNS will send a certified collection letter to the parent/guardian of each elementary school student who reaches a negative balance of \$75.00, to the parent/guardian of each middle school student who reaches a negative balance of \$50.00, and to the parent/guardian of each high school student who reaches a negative balance of \$25.00. Certification receipts and PDF's of the letters sent will be kept for documentation. Any letters returned for change of address will be sent to the school to be researched, corrected, and mailed.

- H. School principals, or administrative designees, will make verbal contact, if possible, with the parents/guardians of students who have reached the charge limit at elementary schools of \$100.00, at middle schools of \$75.00, and at high schools of \$50.00, notifying them that meals will no longer be provided. If the school is not able to reach the parents/guardians, they will make the contact by certified mail.
- I. At middle and high schools, the principals or administrative designee will contact the parent/guardian, notifying them that meals will no longer be provided.
- J. At elementary schools, principals, or administrative designee, will contact the parents/guardians of students who have exceeded the \$100.00 charge limit and continue to come to school without meals via telephone to ask them to bring in a meal or money for the child's meal that day. If they cannot be reached or cannot come to school, the student will be provided an alternate meal.
- K. With each contact, school staff will encourage households to complete an application for meal assistance.
- L. All parental/guardian contact will be documented in the SMS contact log.

VI. Consequences to Households for Failure to Pay Charge Debt

Schools will have the option of sending households owing \$25.00 or more at year-end to collection via TSI Client Services. All other collection efforts on this debt will stop at that point.

VII. Year-End Reimbursement for Unpaid Debt

At year-end, school principals will be billed for unpaid balances on student accounts. Schools may use PTA/PTO donations, appropriate charitable donations within the Student Activity Funds, or appropriated funds to pay for these uncollected meal charges.

The Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services (or designee) and the level associate superintendents are responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.