

Meal Charges

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district that balances the nutritional needs of students and the financial integrity of the food service account.

Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent or designee shall establish written meal charge practices that align with all applicable state and federal requirements. These practices shall be provided in writing to all students and their parents/guardians at the start of each school year and to students and their parents/guardians transferring to the school or school district during the school year. In addition, these practices may be included in the student handbook and/or on online portals used to access student accounts.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that all school and/or food service staff responsible for policy enforcement are provided with a copy of the District's written meal charge policies and guidelines.

Definition

"School meal" means any school food program meal served on a nonprofit basis. School food programs include, but are not limited to, federal school food programs.

Guidelines

1. Parents/Guardians are solely responsible for providing their children with money for school meals and responsible for all charges incurred by their children for school meals.
2. The District's food services department is equipped with a computerized lunch payment system that operates as a point of sale system based on a student's identification number. Parents/guardians are encouraged to deposit money into their child's account.
3. Regardless of whether a student has money to pay for a school meal or owes money for school meals, a school meal must be provided to a student who requests one, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written 25 directive to the school to withhold a meal.
4. The student's account will be charged for the meal provided.
5. When a student owes money for five (5) or more school meals, the school must make at least two (2) attempts to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian apply for participation in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Regardless of the result of the two initial attempts (successful or unsuccessful) to reach the parent/guardian, the District shall continue with its procedures to collect delinquent debt as outlined in this policy.

6. Communications regarding money owed by a student for school meals must be made to the student's parent/guardian and not to the student. Such correspondence may be mailed to the parent/guardian or delivered via written notice that is delivered by the student in an envelope marked "Confidential – to be opened by addressee only".

Students **in grades 9-12** can be told of their debt at the register discreetly for as long as a letter is also sent to the parent/guardian.

For students enrolled **in kindergarten through eighth grade**, communication regarding lunch account balances may not be made to the student.

7. A student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes money for a school meal shall not be publicly identified or stigmatized.
8. A student who cannot pay for a school meal shall not be required to perform chores or other work to pay for the school meal. This paragraph shall not apply if chores or other work are required of all students regardless of the student's inability to pay for the school meal.
9. A student may not be required to discard a school meal after it was served to the student due to the student's inability to pay for the school meal or the amount of money owed by the student for prior school meals.
10. The District may accept gifts or donations for the direct benefit of students to offset delinquent student meal accounts.

Legal References

Local Meal Charge Guidelines

24 P.S. § 5-510

24 P.S. §13-1337