

**FIRST READING MARCH 14, 2023**

**Business/Non-Instructional Operations**

**Food Service**

**Charging Policy**

The Board of Education (Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced price meals to eligible elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. Applicants for such meals are responsible to pay for meals until the application for the free or reduced price meals is completed and approved. All applications for free and reduced price lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

According to federal regulations, funds from the nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA) cannot be used to cover the cost of unpaid meals.

Federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children/students, and these funds may not be used to subsidize the meals of teachers, staff or visitors. Adults are not allowed to charge meals and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

Charging is not encouraged by the Board, but on those occasions that a student does not have lunch money, s/he will be permitted to charge a reimbursable meal.

The Board prohibits the public identification or shaming of a child/student for any unpaid charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student, (charging a second meal during breakfast or lunch is prohibited)
2. Designating a specific meal option for such student,
3. Or otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such student.

In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, any charging of meals must be consistent with this policy and any accompanying regulations. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall develop regulations designed to effectively and respectfully address family responsibility for unpaid meals.

## **Business/Non-Instructional Operations**

### **Food Service**

#### **Charging Policy (continued)**

##### **The Board's policy regarding meal charging is as follows:**

1. No student shall be deprived a reimbursable meal due to forgotten or lost meal money.
2. If a meal charge must occur, the student will be given the same reimbursable meal options that other students are provided.
3. The District currently uses MyPaymentsPlus, an automated payment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their student's meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their student's school meal account. Negative balance status can be avoided by making a payment in the form of cash, check, or by credit card to the MyPaymentsPlus website. The District reserves the right to change the online payment platform at any time but guarantees the online option will remain available.
4. Students shall be allowed up to thirty (30) reimbursable meal charges. No a-la-carte items can be charged. If the charge exceeds 30 reimbursable meals, the District must refer the parent to the designated local McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Education Liaison.

##### **Communication to Parents regarding unpaid meal balances**

Parents of students who charge shall be notified by phone, text or email, after their student has received the meal. After charging four meals, the parents shall receive written notification. If a pattern of charging continues, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application.

If the charge exceeds 30 reimbursable meals, the District must refer the parent to the designated local McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Education Liaison. Communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a student's unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries, application for free or reduced price meals and the Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program and a link to the District's website that lists any community services available to town/city residents.

##### **Gifts/Donations**

The Board will accept any gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school meals.

## **Business/Non-Instructional Operations**

### **Food Service**

#### **Charging Policy (continued)**

#### **Dissemination of Policy**

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school or school district during the school year.

This policy shall be included in student/parent handbooks, on online portals that households use to access student accounts, placed on the District's website, on the website of each school, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals and again to the household the first time the policy is applied to a specific student.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting students in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also should be informed of this policy.

The District's school food authority shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.