

POLICY 534 - FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS, ACCOUNTS & UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

Adopted: 10/15/2018

Revised: 7/17/23 Revised: July 2025

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and that school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for a la carte items or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a student may not charge additional a la carte or seconds unless paying with cash. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge second meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Families may make electronic payments to the student's individual meal account through Infinite Campus or pay at the school office with cash or a check. Cash payments must be submitted with the student's name so proper credit is given to the student account.

If the school district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage below the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate via the Community Eligibility Provision must participate in the free school meals program.

- B. A school that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage at or above the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate must participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision in order to participate in the free school meals program.
- C. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:
- (1) participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and
 - (2) provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.
- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
- E. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.
- F. If the school receives an "insufficient funds check" from a family for the student's individual meal account the following things will occur:
- 1. Any cost the school may incur from processing an "insufficient funds check" will

- be added to the student's individual meal account.
- 2. The school will not accept any additional checks from a person who wrote an "insufficient funds check."
- 3. Payments to the student's individual meal account can then only be made by credit card or cash.
- G. If a student's individual meal account reaches zero or becomes negative the student will not be allowed to charge meals or a-la-carte items until additional money is deposited in the student's individual meal account.
- H. A student with a negative individual meal account balance will be allowed to purchase an al-a-carte item if the student pays cash. Cashiers do not make change at the point of sale so any change from a purchase will be applied the students lunch account. i.e. A student has \$5 and purchases an item for \$1.25, the change, \$3.75 will be applied to the students lunch account.
- I. Students wishing to purchase a second meal or an al-a-carte must first go to the cashier before going through the lunch line and purchase a "seconds/a-la-carte" ticket. The ticket must be presented to the line cook before a seconds/al-a-carte item is place on their tray. **Students with a negative balance in their individual meal account will not be allowed to charge a second or a-la-carte.**
- J. Under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, the school district makes breakfast and lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance. **The school district is not required to provide free seconds or free a-la-carte items for students in the free and reduced program.** Students in the free and reduced program can purchase seconds or an al-a- carte item with cash or may charge that item to their individual meal account only if the account has funds in that account.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified twice a week by email or letter when the student's individual meal account has \$15 or less in it.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing nonreimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.
- D. Parents and/or students can check their individual meal account balance by going to the Infinite Campus Portal parent on the District Web Site at www.isd511.net or by calling Renee Bullerman at 483-2266 or by emailing r.bullerman@isd511.net

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children. **Renee Bullerman, District Secretary can assist families with the application process.** Free and reduced application forms are included in the student registration packet and are also available on the District Web Site at www.isd511.net
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to work with families collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Payment plans and other or arrangements can be made with **Renee Bullerman**, District Secretary, as part of on going efforts by the district to collect on delinquent debt.

- A. Negative balances not paid prior to *June 30 of each year*, will be subject to collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law
- C. All outstanding balances to an individual's prepaid meal account from the previous year must be paid in full before the start of the new school year. Failure to do so will prevent your family from using the individual prepaid meal account system in the new school year. Students that start the year with an outstanding balance will be allowed to purchase meals on a daily basis for cash only.
- D. Families are still responsible to pay for all charges made to individual's prepaid meal account before they qualified for free/reduced lunch.

V. CLOSED NOON HOUR

Noon hours are closed by School Board directive. Students in grades K-12 must remain on Campus in their designated lunch areas for lunch. **The District does not allow the delivery of food or beverages from outside vendors or fast food establishments for a student's breakfast or lunch.** Furthermore, the District does not allow parents to bring in a purchased or special meal for an individual student or a group of students. Students are allowed to bring a sack lunch from home if they choose not to eat school lunch. Sack lunches must be eaten in the cafeteria and are not allowed in the hallways. The School District does not provide a microwave for student to use for reheating a food item brought from home. Parents are not permitted to excuse their child to leave school to purchase a lunch at vendor such as Subway, Kum & Go, The Sports Page, etc.

VI. BREAKFAST & LUNCH SERVING TIMES

Breakfast is served from 7:40-8:10 daily at the Elementary and 7:30-8:10 at the Middle/High School Buildings. Students who use the lunchroom for the breakfast and noon meal are reminded of their responsibility to help keep it clean. Plates, silverware, napkins, etc., must be picked up and returned to the wash area after the meal. Students unwilling to extend this reasonable courtesy will face school consequences as determined by the principal and school discipline policy.

VII. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district may post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.
- C. If the school district contracts with a third party for its meal services, it will provide the vendor with its school meals policy. The school district will ensure that any third-party provider with whom the school district enters into either an original or modified contract after July 1, 2021, adheres to the school district's school meals policy.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
 Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)

USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A

Cross References: None