



SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

POLICY:	535
ADOPTED:	01/23/23

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 school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. General Statement of Policy

Minnesota Statute 123D.111 states that Minnesota school districts that participate in the national school lunch program must adopt a school meals policy. School districts must also follow appropriate debt collection practices when attempting to recover unpaid meal charges. Local school districts may vary the meal charge policy for elementary, middle, and high schools.

III. Payment of Meals

- A. Students may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their meal account through online card payments, cash, or check.
- B. Households may apply for free/reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are mailed to all households along with the school calendar, prior to the start of the school year. Applications are included in new enrollment packets and also are available in the school office, kitchen office and Food Service office in both the English and Spanish, and per request, sent via mail or email. Applications are available online at www.isd199.org under Food Service and through the educational benefit application process.
- C. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.
- D. A student who has been determined to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch always must be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.

- E. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.
- F. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to make an a la carte purchase.
- G. 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 siblings accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

IV. Low, Negative or Unpaid Meal Account Balances Notification

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Reference the district's "Negative Meal Charge Procedure" available on the district website for more detailed information regarding low balance notifications.
- B. Families will be notified via automated phone calling and/or email and text messages when a student's meal account balance falls to a negative amount. Parent/guardian's may not opt out of receiving notifications from the school district. Parent/guardian's are expected to have a current address, working phone number and/or email in the parent portal, such as Campus Portal.
- C. Families will be notified via mail when a student's meal account balance has reached negative \$20.00. A letter will be mailed to the household address stating the current negative meal account balance and include an Application for Educational Benefits. The letter will state how to make a payment on the meal account and contact information to arrange a payment plan.
- D. Families will again be notified via mail when a student's meal account balance has reached negative \$30.00. A letter will be mailed to the household address stating the current negative meal account balance and include an Application for Educational Benefits. A phone call is made to notify the parent of the negative balance.
- E. No student in the serving line will be denied a meal. If a student's account does not have enough money to pay for a breakfast and/or a lunch meal, the student will still be allowed to purchase a meal, which will cause the account balance to become negative. All students will be provided a meal regardless of their account balance. While the district is under no legal obligation to do so, we believe this is in the best interest for the student.

- F. All notifications and communication efforts will be facilitated and documented by district employees.
- G. If a student's meal account falls below negative \$50 (fifty dollars) or more, or a household of 2 or more students falls below negative \$100 (one hundred dollars), a United States Postal Service certified letter will be mailed to the address on record. If there is no response from the parent or guardian within 14 days after receipt of the certified letter, further efforts to collect the negative balance will be pursued.
- H. 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, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.
- I. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- J. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debit is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- K. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- L. The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.
- M. More details about how the handling of unpaid student meal charges are available by contacting the District Food Service Office at 651-306-7822.

V. 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, ect.) to:
 - a. all households at or before the start of each school year:
 - b. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of

enrollment; and

- c. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy .
- B. The school district will post this policy on the school district's website; or the website of the organization where the meal is served, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (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: Food Services Negative Balance Procedures