

Wabasha-Kellogg School Policy

534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

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 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. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students have use of a meal account. Students will be provided with the same breakfast and lunch meal as other students, regardless of their account balance being positive or negative. Once a meal has been placed on a tray, or otherwise served to a student, the meal cannot be withdrawn from the student based on any outstanding balance due.
- B. Students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals will be offered breakfast and lunch free (or for the reduced price if that price is not set at free), regardless of their account balance being positive or negative.
- C. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge extra items other than breakfast and lunch.
- D. Deposits to accounts can be made electronically through the Student Information Systems portal. Deposits can also be made by bringing cash in a properly labeled envelope, or by bringing a check with sufficient information to deposit into the correct account. Cash and checks can be dropped off in the elementary office, the high school office, or the kitchen. Students may also pay for meals with cash at the time of purchase.
- E. When a student has cash in hand to pay for a meal, or for extra items, that cash may not be applied toward any outstanding balance due.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. When meal account balances are low or fall below zero, the School District will make reasonable efforts to notify families by email, US mail, or personal phone call.
- B. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

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 may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. 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 debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances of more than \$200.00 not paid prior to end of quarter will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for 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.
- D. The School District may not enlist the assistance of non-School District employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. 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.

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, or 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.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 442 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