



Perpich Center for Arts Education

Adopted: September 2017

Revised:

For Reference Only

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 103

Orig. 2017

Rev.

534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

[Note: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016 requires all School Food Authorities (i.e., school districts) operating federal school meal programs to have a written and clearly communicated system to address unpaid meal charges by July 1, 2017. USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017 clarified that school districts could adopt a “policy” or “standard practice.” Although this document is styled as a “policy,” school districts may establish and implement a set of written procedures instead of a policy, provided that the written document explains how the school district will handle situations where students eligible to receive reduced-price or paid meals do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of their meals at the time of service. The policy or standard practice must be implemented throughout the school district.]

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. When the balance reaches zero, a student may charge no more than \$30.00 to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Families may pay by cash, check or credit card. Cash may be sent in with the student and paid to the front receptionist for deposit to the student account. Checks may be mailed or sent with the student to be paid to the front receptionist for deposit to the student’s account. Payments by credit card may be done in person or over the phone to the front receptionist.
- B. The school district receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, therefore it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- 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. The school district may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student’s account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate

special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal (\$2.00) will be charged to the student's account or otherwise charged to the student.

- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.
- F. 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.

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. As a courtesy, families will be notified once the balance reaches \$10.00. Families will be notified by email. A second notification will be sent if the account reaches a negative balance.
- C. 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 \$50.00 not paid prior to the end of the month will be turned over to the Executive Director or his/her designee for collection. The collection process will follow the guidelines of Minnesota Management and Budget operating procedure 0504-01.01- Debt Collection Process and Action. 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 may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

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, 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 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 require written notification described above.

Legal References:

- Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4
- 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