

MILACA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Board Policy

Adopted: February 2020

Revised: August 2023

Reviewed: August 2023

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

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

- C. Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a student may charge no more than \$50 to this account. 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.

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, they 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- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.

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 of an outstanding balance once a negative balance is reached. Families will be notified by the automated calling system.
- 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.

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 or 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 not paid prior to the end of the school year will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. In some instances, the school district does use a collection agency to collect unpaid school meal debts after reasonable efforts first have been made by the school district to collect the debt. 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 (student handbook) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
- 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.
- 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, (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

MILACA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MILACA BOARD POLICY
ADDENDUM TO POLICY 534
Adopted: May, 2023

FOOD SERVICE ASSISTANCE FUND DISTRIBUTION PROCEDURES

Community members and organizations support Milaca Public Schools by donating funds to assist with meal debt on student accounts. In accordance with Policy 534, the school district communicates and works with families as much as possible to address their food service debt.

The school district prioritizes making an attempt to meet the donors wishes, if applicable, for the funds if they have a specific request.

The following procedures will be utilized to allocate funds to best address meal debt:

- 1) The school district will encourage families to complete an Educational Benefit Application, if this hasn't been completed yet, for the school year.
- 2) Families that have completed the Educational Benefits Application will be provided with priority and funds will be allocated as follows unless the donor has made a specific request otherwise:
 - a) Pay off the meal debt for families that are experiencing homelessness as indicated by the school district.
 - b) Pay off meal debt for families that have been approved for free or reduced meals.
 - c) Pay off meal debt for families that are experiencing temporary financial hardships. This includes working with families to match their payments towards their meal debt.
 - d) The Food Service Director will work with school district administration and support staff to determine families that are in need of support to pay off meal debt.