

MENDON-UPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHARGE AND COLLECTION OF PAYMENT FOR SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE/POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department and eventually on the general fund budget. The goals of this policy are:

- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.
- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, students and parent/guardians to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish policies that are age appropriate.
- To encourage the parent/guardian to assume responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- THE FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the School District (School Principals and Business Manager) of outstanding balances. The Food Service Department is also responsible for notifying the student's parent/guardian of outstanding balances.
- THE SCHOOL DISTRICT: Responsible for supporting the Food Service Department in collection activities.
- THE PARENT/GUARDIAN: Responsible for keeping their children's account paid up to date.

III. ADMINISTRATION

1. Free and Reduced Lunch Students

- a. FREE LUNCH STATUS STUDENTS will not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Free lunch status allows a student to receive a free meal every day. A la Carte items are not part of the USDA program and must be purchased separately.
- b. REDUCED LUNCH STATUS STUDENTS will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum of \$5.00 which will be known as the "account cap". Reduced lunch status allows a student to receive reduced price meals at \$0.40.

2. All Other Students

- a. ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum of \$30.00 which will be known as the "account cap".
 - (1) These meals will include anything on the menu.
 - (2) Notices of deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.
 - (3) When the student reaches the "account cap" they will be offered a designated menu alternate. Sample: Cheese Sandwich or Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich (whichever is available) + veggie sticks or fruit (whichever is available) + milk.
 - (4) This designated menu alternate will be charged to the student's lunch account at the standard lunch rate. It will be reported as a meal to the state and federal school lunch

- authorities and thus will be eligible for reimbursement. Parents/Guardians are responsible for payment of these meals to the Food Service Program; and
- (5) Once the student reaches the “account cap”, no a la carte items will be sold to the student until the account is fully paid.

3. Balances Owed

Balances may be checked at any time by logging into www.myschoolbucks.com system or by emailing the Food Service Director. All accounts must be paid by the end of the school year. In addition to the regular notices sent home during the school year, a balance due notice will be sent home approximately four (4) weeks prior to the end of the school year.

- a. CHECKS RETURNED FOR NON-SUFFICIENT FUNDS “NSF”: When a check is returned to the Business Office for “NSF”, a phone call to inform the parent/guardian of the “NSF” along with the appropriate penalty fee, pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 60, Section 57A. Payment must be made within (10) days of the call to the MURSD Business Office. When the NSF notice is received, the Food Service Director will deduct the check amount from the student’s account.
- b. BALANCES OWED WITH NO RESPONSE FROM PARENT/GUARDIAN: If the amount owed is not received, the Superintendent or his/her designee may take one or more of the following actions:
 - 1) Delay the issuance of report cards, transfer cards, and class assignments until payment obligations are met.
 - 2) Prohibit the student from participating in any fee based program until or unless outstanding balances are paid.
 - 3) Prohibit the student from participating in senior activities or graduation exercises or receipt of diploma.
 - 4) Referral to small claims court and/or District Attorney’s Office.

4. Fiscal Year End

At the first of June, the Food Service Department must begin the process of closing out the fiscal year and reconciling all accounts with the Director of Finance & Operations and the District Treasurer. As a result, the following will take place:

- a. Parents/Guardians will be sent a written request for “Payment in Full”. The payment requests will be mailed to the home address on file.
 - (1) Students who forget money or have a zero balance in their account will be offered a designated menu alternate meal. Sample: Cheese Sandwich or Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich (whichever is available) + veggie sticks or fruit (whichever is available) + milk.
 - (2) This designated menu alternate will be charged to the student’s lunch account at the standard lunch rate. It will be reported as a meal to the state and federal school lunch authorities and thus will be eligible for reimbursement. Parents/Guardians are responsible for payment of these meals to the Food Service Program.
 - (3) All charges not paid before the end of the school year must be dealt with through the General Fund budget, pursuant to new USDA federal regulations.

This burdens the general fund budget and affects its ability to fund teachers, instructional supplies, and other expenditures necessary to operate the school district.

(4) Seniors must pay all outstanding balances before receiving their cap and gown.

5. Other Matters

- a. All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain a record of all monies paid and deposited for each student. Said record will be made available to the parent upon request. The Food Service Department shall inform parents that meals can be paid in advance to mitigate outstanding balance issues and to assure that their child's account has sufficient funds to minimize the possibility that their child may be without meal money on any given day.
- b. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the Principal will investigate the situation, including contacting the parent/guardian to bring money to the school and/or encouraging the parent to apply for free or reduced price meals. If the situation continues the Principal will report it to the Superintendent for further investigation.
 - (1) BLOCK ON ACCOUNTS: A parent may call the Food Service Director to place a block on their child's account to prohibit the purchase of a la carte items or set dollar cap.
 - (2) REFUNDS:
 - a) WITHDRAWN STUDENTS: For any student who is withdrawn, a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. An email request is also acceptable.
 - b) GRADUATING STUDENTS: Students who are graduating at the end of the year may receive a refund with a written request. Funds can also be transferred to a sibling's account with a written request.
- c. UNCLAIMED FUNDS: All refunds must be requested within one year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Mendon-Upton Public Schools Food Service Program.
- d. ADULT CHARGES: Adult Meal charges are not allowed when a negative balance exists. Payment must be made at the time of purchase.

Legal References: 7 CFR 210, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87
M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 72 – Sale of Lunches
M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 68 – Duties of towns to maintain schools; transportation of children; school building committee representation
M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37K – Business demonstration projects; disposition of proceeds
M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 69 – Municipal or district services, fees or charges; insufficient funds checks; penalty
M.G.L. chapter 60, Section 57A – Payment by check not duly paid; penalty