

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.~~

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

- A. Students are provided a meal account. This account will track students' food purchases and charge the account for second meals, optional or additional milk, and ala carte purchases. All students will receive a regular meal at no charge. No student will be denied a regular meal, even if their account falls into a negative balance.

Students will not be allowed to purchase snack or a la carte items if the account has a negative balance. Families will be notified of account balances as outlined in Section III. Families may add money to students' lunch accounts by online payment, cash or check payments can be made at the school with the nutritional services facilitator or in the office.

~~B. 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. Families will be notified of a low account balance once the balance in the account reaches \$10.00 or less. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches -\$0.01. Families will be notified through an automated calling system twice weekly. Families also receive automated E-mail notifications if there is an E-mail address on file.

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. 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.

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 \$100 not paid prior to the end of the school year may 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. The school district may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies or other commencement activities due to unpaid meal charges.

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 district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.

B. The school district ~~will~~ ^{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. 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

BOARD POLICY 534

St. Cloud Area School District 742

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Adopted: August 9, 2017

Reviewed/No Change: March 2018

Revised: March 10, 2021

Revised: February 7, 2024

Revised: _____, 2026