

## **MEAL CHARGE 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. 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/guardian to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish policies that are age appropriate.
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.

### **II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:**

Food Service Department: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the school district of outstanding balances. The food service department is also responsible for notifying the student's parent/guardian of low or outstanding balances.

School District: Responsible for supporting the food service department in collection activities.

Parent/Guardian: Responsible for immediate payment.

### **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 child to receive a free meal everyday. A la Carte items are not part of the USDA program.
- b) Reduced lunch status students will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum dollar equivalent of ten (10) reduced priced meals,

which will be known as the “account cap.” Reduced lunch status allows a child to receive reduced priced meals at \$0.40.

- c) Notices of deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at weekly intervals during the school year via regular US mail.
- d) When the child reaches the “account cap,” regular menu items will continue to be offered and the principal will be notified of the deficit balance. Principals are to directly communicate with parents/guardians to remedy the deficit situation.

2) All Other Students:

- a) Elementary / Intermediate school students: will be allowed to charge up to a maximum dollar equivalent of ten (10) meals which will be known as the “account cap.” The account cap is intended to provide meals while parents are notified of low or deficit balances and while parent payments are in transit.

(1) These meals will include anything on the menu.

(2) Notices of deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at weekly intervals during the school year via regular US mail.

(3) When the child reaches the “account cap,” regular menu items will continue to be offered and the Schools Principal will be notified of the deficit balance. Principals are to directly communicate with parents/guardians to remedy the deficit situation.

(4) Once the child reaches the “account cap”, no a la carte items will be sold to the child.

(5) High school students: will not be allowed to charge any school meals that would add to or cause their lunch account to go into a deficit balance.

- 3) Any payments made by check that are returned to the district by the bank with notice of “insufficient funds” will require a penalty fee of \$25.00 by party writing the check (M.G.L Chapter 60, Section 57A). The penalty fee will be made payable to the Town of Barnstable and sent to the food service department office. The penalty fee and the amount of the check will be deducted from the child/children’s lunch account immediately upon notice from the bank and the above mentioned rules will take effect.
- 4) At the fifteenth of May, the food service program must begin to close the books for the school year.

- a) Parents/guardians will be sent a written request for “Payment in Full.” (The deposit requests will be mailed home.)
  - b) All charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year.
  - c) Seniors must pay all charges before receiving their cap and gown.
  - d) All seniors will receive a notice in May of remaining money in their lunch account. They will receive a letter to elect to move money into a sibling lunch account or to elect a refund. All refund requests will be sent to the food service office and then forwarded to the business office for payment.
- 5) The food service department maintains a record of all monies deposited and spent for each student and that record will be made available to the parent upon request. The food service department Program or the school district’s food service management company shall inform parents that meals can be paid for in advance and the balances maintained in their child’s account to minimize the possibility that the child may be without meal money on any given day. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the food service department will investigate the situation more closely, including contacting the parent/guardian to bring money to the school and/or encouraging the parent to apply for free or reduced price meals.
- 6) For purposes of sending notices of deficit balances to parents in accordance with section III(1)(c) and III(2)(a)(2), the food service director will from time to time determine the deficit amount over which notices will be sent, subject to the approval of the deputy finance director.
- 7) School principals may make exceptions to the procedures in Section III of this policy if they believe it is in the best interest of a student to do so as long as the exceptions do not adversely affect the financial condition of the food service program. In the event that the principal believes the charge policy is intentionally being abused the principal is authorized to limit or restrict student access to district extra-curricular opportunities.

**ADOPTION DATE:** March 9, 2010

**REVISED DATE:** September 18, 2013

**LEGAL REF.:** 7 CFR 210

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