

Collection of Payment for School Meals Policy: EFD

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 treat any student receiving an alternative lunch as a result of this policy with discretion and make every attempt to protect the privacy of the student.
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, students, and parent(s)/guardian(s) 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:

The Food Service Department: Through its manager and clerk the food service department is 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.

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

The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment.

III. ADMINISTRATION

1) Free and Reduced Lunch Students

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- 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 every day. 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 (5) reduced priced meals which will be known as the “account cap”.

2) All other Students:

- a) Elementary students: will be allowed to charge up to a maximum dollar equivalent of five (5) meals which will be known as the “account cap”.
 - (1) These meals will include only items that are part of a reimbursement meal. No snacks may be purchased.
 - (2) Notices of low or deficit balances will be mailed or sent to parent(s)/guardian(s) via connect ed message with instructions on how to pay debt, and informing parents students will receive an alternative lunch if applicable, and information regarding application for free or reduced lunch. These notices will be at regular intervals during the school year.
 - (3) When the child reaches the “account cap” they will only be offered a designated menu alternate. Sample: Cheese sandwich + milk+ vegetable+ fruit. This designated menu alternate will be charged to the child’s 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.
 - (4) Once the child reaches the maximum meal charge, no a la carte items will be sold to the child ***and all transactions will become a cash basis transaction or prepaid through “my school bucks.com”.***
- b) Middle School Students: Will be allowed to charge up to a maximum dollar equivalent of two (2) meals which will be known as the “account cap”. When the child reaches the “account cap” they will only be offered a designated menu alternate. (Sample: Cheese sandwich +milk +vegetable +fruit.) This designated menu alternate will be charged to the child’s 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.

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- c) **High School Students:** Will be allowed to charge up to a maximum dollar equivalent of two (2) meals which will be known as the “account cap” When the child reaches the “account cap” they will only be offered a designated menu alternate. (Sample: Cheese sandwich +milk +vegetable +fruit.) This designated menu alternate will be charged to the child’s 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.

3) Balances Owed: Collection of Balances owed will follow School Committee Policy.

Balances may be checked at any time by logging into the Whitson’s Site. All accounts must be settled at the end of the school year. Accounts not settled will carry over into the next year’s account. Students will not be allowed to accrue any overages. Payment plans may only be approved by the Executive Director of Finance and Administration.

- a) **Checks Returned for Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF):** When a check is returned to the Treasurer’s Office for “NSF”, a letter will be sent to inform the parent(s) from the Food Service Director. Payment must be received within ten (10) days of the date of the letter. Any penalty fee will be made payable to the Town of Saugus and sent to the Food Service 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. Second requests will follow M.G.L. Chapter 93 40 A.
- b) **Balances Owed with no response by Parent/Guardian:** If the payment is not received, the Superintendent or his/her designee may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law regulation:
 - 1) Prohibit participation of the student or other students in the student’s household from participating in any future fee based program until or unless outstanding balances are resolved.
 - 2) Prohibit student participation in the senior activities or graduation exercises.
 - 3) Referral to a collection agency or DCF or small claims court.

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- 4) All charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year.
 - 5) Seniors must pay all charges before receiving their cap and gown.
 - 6) 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 sibling lunch account or to elect a refund. All refund requests will be sent to the food service office to be processed for payment.
- 4) All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain a record of all monies deposited and spent for each student and said record will be made available to the parent upon request. The Food Service Department 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 principal/designee 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 priced meals.
- a) **Blocks 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. The School Business Manager may instruct the Food Service Director to place a block on all student's account due to non-payment of district fees or other collection issues.
- b) **Refunds**
- i) 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 e-mail request is also acceptable.
 - ii) Graduating Students: Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given a refund. 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 property of the Saugus Public School Food Service Program.

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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

M.G.L. Chapter 93: Section 40 A. Dishonored checks; demand for payment

Voted: Adopted 8/16/2016