

In accordance with state and federal law, the Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure 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, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

### **Payment of Meals**

Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches -\$25, a student may charge no more than an additional \$50 to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Cash or check can be delivered to the school office and online payments are all acceptable forms of payment. If at any time a parent/guardian believes they may qualify for free or reduced lunches under federal guidelines, they should contact the Food Service Assistant for the necessary paperwork.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Students with outstanding meal charge debt shall be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

### **Negative Account Balances**

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with the student's parent or guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Parents or guardians will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches -\$25. Families will be notified by letter. Negative balances of more than \$75 will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options may include collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law. In addition, for an elementary or middle school or high school student, he/she will be required to bring a sack lunch or the child will receive an alternative meal, such as a cheese or peanut butter sandwich, fruit and milk instead of the regular hot lunch menu items. A fee for the cost of these alternate lunches will be charged to the student's account.

If a negative balance continues to increase, the parent may be sent a notice from the business office stating that the payment must be made within five business days of the date on the notice or further collection procedures (small claims) could be pursued for payment on the account. If a parent/guardian begins good faith efforts to make regular payments, as determined by the superintendent and business office, towards eliminating the negative balance, the district may postpone additional collection procedures.

Please note that money needs to be available in a child's lunch account in order for extra meals, extra milks or a la carte to be purchased. This applies to all students, including students from families participating in the free and reduced lunch program.

Negative balances will be carried over the following school year. These negative balances must be paid in full prior to the school starting as part of the school registration process. Parents with accounts in arrears will be asked to send a lunch from home until negative balances have been taken

care of or a payment schedule arranged and adhered to. The school district reserves the right to take any other reasonable action, including legal action, to collect the balance due in any student's account.

### **Unpaid Student Meals Account**

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

### **Communication of the Policy**

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information was communicated to households and staff will be retained.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent to develop an administrative regulation for implementing this policy.

Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 et seq.  
7 C.F.R. §§ 210 et seq.  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 46-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: LOCAL MEAL CHARGE POLICIES (2016).  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 47-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: CLARIFICATION ON COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT MEAL PAYMENTS (2016).  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 57-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: GUIDANCE AND Q&A (2016).  
Iowa Code 283A.  
281 I.A.C. 58.