

## **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 to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. It is the policy of ISD #413 to offer breakfast and provide lunch at school. The Food Service Department strives to produce quality meals in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.
- B. ISD #413 (Marshall Public Schools) recognizes the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Proper nutritional intake is essential for adequate learning to occur.
- C. The food service department utilizes a computerized Point of Sale system requiring pre-payments. Students may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their personal account. Cash payments are always accepted and students selecting ala-carte options can use either cash or positive lunch account funds at the Middle School and High School.
- D. Account balances must be positive. The lunch account works similar to a checking account. When a meal or item is purchased, the amount is deducted from the family lunch account. School lunch account information may be accessed online.
- E. Families may apply for free/reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are provided to all families in the district prior to the school year. In addition, applications are available at the district office and online at the District website: [www.marshall.k12.mn.us/schoollunch](http://www.marshall.k12.mn.us/schoollunch)

### **III. PAYMENT OF MEALS**

- A. All meal purchases are to be prepaid before meal service begins. A student who does not have sufficient funds will not be allowed to charge meals or a la carte items until additional money is deposited in the student's account. Family balances are available on the Parent Portal. The Parent Portal may be accessed through the

district's website. Statements may be requested from the Food Service Director via email or telephone anytime.

- B. Payments can be made online through the Marshall Public Schools website, in person at any school location, by phone, or by mail to:  
Taher  
400 Tiger Dr  
Marshall, MN 56258
- C. If the school district receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- D. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.
- F. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.
- G. 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 permission is received from the parent or guardian.

#### **IV. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION**

- A. All students in grades K-12 will be notified in the lunch line each day when their account is at \$5.00 or less.
- B. The school district and/or the contracted food service provider will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero. Food Service staff will call the family via the phone number on file. If the family cannot be contacted, a letter will be sent to the address on file.
- C. Statements are also mailed at the end of each week to families with a negative balance in their food service account.
- D. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

#### **V. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES**

- A. The school district and/or the contracted food service provider will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where

appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.

- B. The school district and/or the contracted food service provider 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. Individual lunch account privileges within families with negative account balances of \$25.00 or more may, at the discretion of food service leadership and school administration, be deactivated or suspended to prevent further unpaid purchases from occurring. Notification of this action will be sent by letter to the family address on file.
- D. Negative balances not paid prior to prior to the end of the school year will 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.
- E. Other than the contracted food service provider, the school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

## **VI. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY**

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing in student handbooks, on the District's website and to all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.

## **VII. STAFF MEALS**

- A. Staff meals may be purchased at a price determined by the Food Service Department. There shall be no complimentary staff meals. To be eligible for the staff meal price, portions for the individual items may not exceed those given to high school aged students.
- B. Staff showing a negative balance of \$25.00 or more in their account will have their account closed until payment is made in full.

**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

**Revision History:**

*Original: 2017*

*Revised: 2017*

*(reference previous policy 789 Meal Charge Management)*