



TO: School Board Members

FROM: Mark Fortman, Director of Operations

DATE: September 22, 2025

SUBJECT: Final Reading of Policy 534, Unpaid Meal Charges

BACKGROUND:

A review of Policy 534, Unpaid Meal Charges, has been performed. This policy was last reviewed in February of 2021. Based on this review, a couple of changes are being recommended to conform with recent MN statute changes and MSBA recommendations.

It is important to note that the changes to the policy are not new practices for our district and only formally add our existing practices to the policy. For years, we have clearly communicated to our staff that there should be no taking of meals from any student, regardless of their account status, or shaming a student in any way.

Significant changes to note are:

Change in policy name to School Meals Policy

Section II, Payment of Meals

- A. Independent School District 197 participates in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program, and therefore all enrolled students will be offered one breakfast and one lunch at no charge while at school regardless of any outstanding child nutrition account balance. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.

Section III, Low or Negative Account Balances - Notification

- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding child nutrition account balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a food item that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing non-reimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

Section IV, Unpaid Meal Charges

- The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student child nutrition account 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 child nutrition account balance.

The policy was reviewed using the 4-way equity test. Within the Strategic Framework, equity is specified as a core value of the district, further emphasizing our commitment to providing all students with equitable access to educational resources, two free meals per day without shame and opportunities such as graduation.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of School District 197 to approve Policy 534, Unpaid Meal Charges, as presented.