

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

[Note: In 2021, the Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes section 124D.111, that now states that Minnesota school districts that participate in the national school lunch program must adopt a school meals policy].

[Note: School districts must follow appropriate debt collection practices when attempting to recover unpaid meal charges.]

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Crosslake Community Schools' (CCS) students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school's nutrition program and that school employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy of CCS is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch sharing or otherwise ostracizing the student. 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. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. When student lunch accounts show a negative balance, families are contacted electronically through an automated e-mail indicating the negative balance and a reminder to the family to remedy the situation. Even though student accounts may run in the negative, CCS will still serve the individual their lunch. Repeat efforts to communicate the negative balance to families will be made until the balance is corrected.
- B. If CCS receives school lunch aid under Minnesota Statutes section 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.
- C. 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.
- D. A student who has been determined to be eligible for free and reduced-price lunch always must be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.
- E. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other CCS officials, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
- F. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge any extra items.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. CCS will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of a negative outstanding balance. Families will be notified by email on a weekly basis until the negative balance is corrected. **Families may receive automated phone calls with negative balance due.**
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to dumping meals, withdrawing a

meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. CCS 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. CCS 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. Negative balances of more than \$100 not paid prior to the end of the quarter will be turned over to the Director or a designee for collection. In some instances, CCS does use a collection agency to collect unpaid school meal debts after reasonable efforts first have been made by CCS to collect the debt.
- D. CCS may not enlist the assistance of non-CCS employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. CCS will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. CCS 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 meal balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all CCS personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. CCS will post this policy on CCS' website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
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

Cross References: None