



WOODBRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

MEMORANDUM

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D. – Superintendent
jbudd@woodbridgesps.org

TO: Woodbridge Board of Education Policy Committee
FROM: Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D., Superintendent
DATE: December 9, 2021
RE: Proposed Revision of Policy 3542.43, “Food Charging Policy”

Please find attached a proposed revision of Policy 3542.43 based primarily on Connecticut Public Act 21-46, which instituted new requirements related to collecting unpaid charges for school meals. The revisions align with the recommendations of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). The proposed changes are represented in red.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Food Charging Policy

In accordance with federal law and USDA guidelines, the Woodbridge School District adopts the following policy to ensure 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 District's nonprofit school nutrition program.

Payment of Meals

Meals can be paid for by cash, by check, or by establishing an account through Meal Payments Plus online at <https://www.mypaymentsplus.com/welcome>

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 Woodbridge Board of Education prohibits the public identification or shaming of a student for any unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student, designating a specific meal option for such student, or otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such student.

The District will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the District will make reasonable efforts to collect annual unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The ~~school~~ District will coordinate communications with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches ~~\$9.00~~ 20.00. Families will be notified by written notice sent home with the student. Such written notice shall include, but not be limited, to: (a) information regarding local food pantries; (b) applications for the District's program for free or reduced-price meals and for the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services; and (c) a link to the District's website that lists any community services available to residents of the Town of Woodbridge. In the event that unpaid meal charges reach the cost of thirty (30) meals, the parents/guardians of such child shall be referred to the district's homeless education liaison. Negative balances of more than \$15.00, not paid prior to end of the school year will be turned over to the Superintendent or his/her designee for collection. ~~Options may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.~~ Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered "delinquent debt," as defined by federal and State statutes, as long as it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30 of each school year. After the debt is reclassified as "bad debt," such debt shall be written off as an operating loss not to be absorbed by the non-profit school food service account, but that must be restored using non-federal funds.

The Board will accept gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school meals.

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.

The Superintendent may develop an administrative process to implement this policy.

(cf. 3542 - Food Services)

(cf. [3542.31](#) - Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-215](#) Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

[10-215a](#) Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

[10-215b](#) Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

P. A. 21-46, "An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health, Safety and Education of Children.

State Board of Education Regulations

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016

Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education "Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to No-paying Full and Reduced-Price Students"

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No. 20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

USDA Guidance:

- SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies"
- SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment"
- SP 57-2016 "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A"
- SP 58-2016 "2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools"

Policy adopted: ~~March 19, 2018~~

WOODBRIIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Woodbridge, Connecticut