

Adopted: 1/27/2022

Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District Policy 534

Reviewed: 1/13/2022

Revised:

Rescinds:

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

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.

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 of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming 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. All meal and a la carte purchases are to be prepaid before meal service begins. Electronic payments with credit or debit cards can be deposited online using the district contracted vendor or with cash or check in person at a school or the district office.
- B. If the school district 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. No student in the serving line will be denied a meal. If a student's account does not have enough money to pay for a breakfast and/or lunch meal, a student will still be allowed to purchase a meal, which will cause the account balance to become negative. All students will be provided a meal regardless of their account balance. While the district is under no legal obligation to do so, we believe this is in the best interest of the student.
- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.

- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a la carte item. Sufficient funds for a la carte items must be provided at the point of sale. It is not intended for a student to be allowed to charge a la carte items.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify parent/guardian when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Parent/guardian will be notified of an outstanding negative balance via phone calls, text messages and/or emails according to the unpaid meal account process managed by Food & Nutrition Services.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances must not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, discarding 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. The school district 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 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. In some instances, the school district does use a collection agency to collect unpaid school meal debts after reasonable efforts first have been made by the school district to collect the debt. 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.
- D. The school district must not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school district must not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal 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 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 district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district must post this policy on the school district's website, or the website of the organization where the meal is served, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.
- C. If the school district contracts with a third party for its meal services, it will provide the vendor with its school meals policy. The school district must ensure that any third-party provider with whom the school district enters into either an original or modified contract after July 1, 2021, adheres to the school district's school meals policy.

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: Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District Policy 102 (Equal Educational Opportunity)
 Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District Policy 103 (Complaints-Students, Employees, Parents, Other Persons)
 Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District Policy 413 (Harassment and Violence)