

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #877 POLICY

## Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose

INDEX TITLE STUDENTS SERIES NO. 500

POLICY TITLE Unpaid Meal Charges CODE NO. 534

### 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. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students are issued a meal account when they enroll at Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools. It is the parent(s)' or guardian's responsibility to make sure adequate funds are available in student meal accounts each day for breakfast and or lunch.
- B. All students will be provided a reimbursable meal regardless of meal account status. While the district is under no legal obligation to do so, it is in the best interest of the student.
- C. Meal payments may be made at the student's school by cash or check or online (<https://campus.bhmschools.org/campus/portalbuffalo.jsp>).
- D. 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.
- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge any ala carte items with the exception of a second entrée.
- F. Families may apply for free or reduced-price meal benefits at any time during the school year. Families need to apply annually for benefits. Applications are available online on the district website ([www.bhmschools.org](http://www.bhmschools.org)), at the Food Service Department Office, or may apply online at the Parent Portal. If the household size or income changes during the year, families can reapply.

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

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of their household account balance when the amount reaches \$20.00. Families will be notified by automated email and text messages.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

### **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. Negative balances of more *than \$50.00 not* paid prior to the last day of June, 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.
- D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school district may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies or other commencement activities due to unpaid meal charges.

### **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 may post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

**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  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (Letter to Ricker)

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<b>DATE OF ADOPTION</b>	<u>June 24, 2019</u>
<b>DATE OF REVIEW</b>	<u><del>May 28, 2019</del></u> <u>December 9, 2019</u>
<b>DATE OF APPROVAL</b>	<u><del>June 24, 2019</del></u> <u>December 9, 2019</u>