

The School Committee and Food Services is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The provisions of this policy pertains to regular price or reduced price school meals only. The School Committee will provide a regular meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.

Meal Charges and Balances

Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee and Food Services for their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. Payment options will be delineated in student handbooks and provided to parents of incoming students. After the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items including but not limited to a second entrée, snack, ice cream, or an additional beverage. The student will still be allowed to take a meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact Director of Food Services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

Payments

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail (when the parent or guardian does not have email) on a weekly basis during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves, over the age of 18 or with the permission of the parent/guardian. If parent/guardian have issues with student purchases they should contact food services for assistance.

Parents/Guardians should pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, will be carried over to the next school year.

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sales systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student. Those records are available to parents by setting up an online account through www.myschoolbucks.com (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the Director of Food Services. The point of sale system is designed to prevent

direct identification of a student's meal status. If applicable, parents will receive automated negative balance emails weekly. If notices do not result in payment, parents will receive a phone call from food services. If the phone call does not result in payment the Director of Food Services shall turn the account over to the Building Principal.

Refunds

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request. Unclaimed funds upon student graduation or leaving the district will become the property of the Leicester Food Services department after six months.

Delinquent Accounts/Collections

Failure to maintain up to date accounts may result in a delay of a student's extra-curricular school services, especially those that are fee based. Graduating seniors may lose the ability to participate in certain graduation related activities.

The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for parental assistance.

Policy Communications

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

LEGAL REFS: MGL [71:72](#); USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017

CROSS REFS: [JQ](#), Student Fees, Fines & Charges

SOURCE: MASC February 2018

ADOPTED: May 8, 2018