

MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The North Middlesex Regional School District School Committee recognizes that a healthy, nutritious meal plays an important role in the readiness and ability of students to learn. The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent policy regarding meal account procedures while treating all students with dignity in the serving line.

Although the school food program is being managed by an outside company, all the money owed to this program is owed to the school district coming out of the general school budget.

Methods of Payment

The North Middlesex Regional School District can accept payment for meals upon purchase in the form of cash or check at the register, or via the school meal on-line payment system. Meals may be prepaid using any of these methods. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to make payments on-line and to register for low balance alerts.

A minimum balance equivalent to five (5) school meals is recommended for those who participate in the food service program.

Administration of Policy

The School District is responsible for ensuring that all accounts, including the food service revolving account, are properly managed and accurately reported. The School District works closely with the Food Service Management Company to monitor students' meal accounts with the goal of eliminating negative balances. Parents/guardians who have signed up on-line for low balance alerts are notified when the account is running low and needs to be replenished.

Any student whose account has a zero balance will be allowed to charge a reimbursable meal. This will result in a negative balance on the account until the balance is resolved. In no event will students at any grade level whose account is delinquent be allowed to charge a la carte items or second meal until the account is in good standing. Cash purchases will be unrestricted.

Account Management

On a weekly basis, the Food Service Director will generate a charge balance report from the POS system. The Director will flag all accounts that are nearing a zero balance or have gone into the negative. A student list, sorted by school, will be sent to the Principals.

After the charge amount exceeds \$10.00, the Food Service Provider will generate a letter or email to be sent home to the parent/guardian. If there are mitigating factors that affect a family's ability to pay, the School District will assist the family in applying for free/reduced meal status, if applicable. If there are no mitigating factors and the family has not made any payments in an effort to reduce the balance due and continues to fail to bring the account back into good standing within one month (or before May 1st in the year of graduation), the school district will advise the family that the matter will be referred to small claims court, collections, and/or other appropriate state agency.

If the balance exceeds fifty dollars (\$50.00), then the following action may be taken (unless prohibited by state law or regulation):

- Prohibited participation of the student in any future fee-based program (field trips, user-fee based programs, etc.) until or unless outstanding balances are resolved,

For students who qualify for free or reduced lunch, accounts will be processed in accordance with federal regulations.

A positive balance will remain on account to be used in the following school year unless the account holder requests that the positive balance be moved to a sibling's account or returned to account holder.

Upon account holder departing the district, the Business Office or their designee will notify the account holder of their end-of-year balance and all reasonable efforts will be made by the District to return the money to the account holder.

LEGAL REFS: Child Nutrition Action of 1966

CROSS REF: EFC