

## **Sparta Area School District**

### Article 711 – Meal Charge Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent procedures for students with insufficient funds for school meals and delinquent accounts in the District's School Nutrition Program. Parents and guardians must plan for their child to have sufficient access to food at school on each school day and must actively monitor and manage their child's school food service account. In order to help parents and guardians meet these responsibilities and to ensure that school families are reasonably informed about the food service operation that are available to students, the District has established the following guidelines regarding food service charges and student access to food at school.

1. General Statement on Policy
  - a. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account.
  - b. Students who have money to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at the time of service will be provided a meal, regardless if they currently have a negative balance in their account. If the student intended to use the money for that day's meal, the cashier will not use the money to repay a negative balance or other unpaid meal charge debt. Negative ala carte charging is not allowed.
  - c. Students without funds to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal are allowed to charge up to \$6.00 will receive a reimbursable meal. (Equivalent of approximately two lunch meals.) When a student's meal debt is at a -\$6.00 and a payment has not been made, the family must provide a sack lunch from home.
  - e. Payments may be made to meal accounts by bringing a check or cash to their child's school office or by making online payments through Skyward Family Access Rev Trak System.
  - f. Adult staff members are not allowed to charge meals.
2. Communicating the Policy
  - a. The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household prior to the start of school each year. It will be included in the Nutrition Services information packet distributed the last week of July and to all transfer students during the school year, and by attaching it to the Meal Benefits Application.
  - b. School Nutrition Program staff will receive training on the meal charge policy and record of training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.
  - c. Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the Federal Program Administrative Review.
3. Notifying the Household of Low or Negative Balance in Student Cafeteria Account
  - a. Determination of the threshold balance will consider meal price, participation, free/reduced eligibility. Skylert is the automated phone/email messaging system used in the Sparta School District. The system will call and e-mail

families Monday through Friday with accounts that are low and have a positive balance between \$5.00 and \$7.00. On Monday through Friday the automated system will call accounts that are negative \$.01 and below.

- b. Parents or guardians may access all meal account status and activity on the Skyward Family Access portal. If parents or guardians do not have access to Family Access they should request their user ID and password from the building secretary.
- c. Parents and guardians may also contact their child's school secretary or the District Nutrition Office to inquire about their account.

#### 4. Collection Procedures for Food Service Debts

Once a student's account has a negative balance, the District will make at least one documented follow-up attempt to collect the debt by providing a person responsible for payment with notice (e.g., by mail, email, telephone, or a similar method) of the amount owed. Payment is due immediately upon notice. If these attempts are not successful, a school official will attempt to make a person-to-person telephone contact or schedule an in-person meeting with a person responsible for payment. These parties may discuss payment plan options. If negative balance still has not been paid after the previous steps:

- a. Debt in a student food service account is not automatically discharged, forgiven, or reduced at the end of the school year or due to a change in a student's enrollment status. (e.g., graduates, transfers, drop-outs, etc.).
- b. At its discretion, the District may continue to pursue collection efforts.
- c. To the extent permitted by law, the District may attempt to achieve collection of a food-service-program debt by referring the debt to a collection service, initiating an action in small claims court, or pursuing other legal action. Costs associated with such actions may be added to the debt that is owed. However, before the District takes any of the steps identified in this paragraph, the District will communicate the intended course of action to a person responsible for payment and provide a final notice of the amount due.

#### 6. Additional Information and Assistance to Households

Or assistance with all issues and questions related to the District's food service program, including eligibility and applications for free or reduced-price meals, student food service accounts, payment methods, the District's online account management system, as well as the specific issues addressed in these procedures, school families can refer to the Nutrition Services Supervisor, or contact the Business Services Manager, housed at the District Administrative Offices; 201 E. Franklin St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Legal Reference: Wisconsin Statute 115.34; 120.1016; 120.13(6)&(10)  
Child Nutrition Program Reauthorization (P.L. 108-265)

Cross Reference: Article 531 – Homeless Education Program  
Article 547 – Indigent Student Policy  
Article 700 – District Wellness Policy  
Article 710 – School Food Service

Approved:

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