

Nashville CCSD # 49

Meal Charging Policy

Nashville CCSD # 49 recognizes the important link between proper nutrition and academic success. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent district procedure for charging meals when students do not have the money to pay, preventing meal charges, and ensuring eligible children are certified for free and reduced-price school meals. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department. This policy is provided electronically during online registration, in writing via beginning of the year packets, is given to each new transfer student, and is posted on the school website.

This meal charge policy is provided to and is reviewed with all school staff responsible for the policy enforcement. The school nurse, and social workers are informed of this procedure.

Families may apply for free/reduced price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of class. In addition, applications are available in each school office. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

Charging meals:

Because hunger is an impediment to learning, no child shall be denied a school meal because of an inability to pay. Children will be served a meal that meets the US Department of Agriculture nutrition standards for school meals.

- Students with a negative balance will be permitted to charge meals without meal substitutions.
- Only students who have been approved under the eligibility guidelines of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program are entitled to a free or reduced price meal. All non-eligible students will be charged for their meal.
- No Ala Cart charging is permitted at any time.

Hand stamps, stickers, or any other means of overt identification of children with unpaid meal debt in the cafeteria or the classroom are prohibited. Additionally, children with unpaid meal debt shall not be required to work off their debt, including, but not limited to, wiping down tables or cleaning the cafeteria.

Preventing meal charges:

- Encourage students' families/caregivers to monitor their child's meal balance online, read paper statements, check weekly balance emails, and to have contact with the school office. Families/caregivers are asked to keep an adequate amount of funds in their child's account to pay for their meals.
- Prepayment is requested. Payments may be made online, or at school with cash or check made payable to Nashville CCSD #49. If payment is sent to school, please include it in an envelope labeled lunch money and the child's name. To access your child's online account visit: nashville49.revtrak.com.
- All households are provided with a school meal application at the start of school or upon enrollment. Applications are provided in the primary language of the family/caregiver and assistance with completing the application is provided upon request.
- Data provided by the state or other school district official is promptly utilized to certify eligible children without an application. Any child for which the school district is not able to obtain a completed school meal application, but the school becomes aware of their eligibility for free or reduced price school meals shall be certified based on an application submitted by the appropriate school official, as permitted by the USDA guidance.

To ensure that households are aware of negative account balances and the potential to accrue meal debt, the school will:

- Send out weekly balance notices: each Thursday afternoon via email, in addition, a paper notice will come home with students the first Friday of each month. Email/on line alerts are in place to notify families of negative account balances.
- Notify and/or work with our principal, school social worker, and/or teachers to understand the student and family's situation and if a school meal application is needed.

Collecting unpaid meal debt:

Communication regarding unpaid meal debt shall be directed to families/caregivers. Families will be notified of the meal charge policy when initially notified of delinquent debt.

- Prior to contacting households regarding unpaid meal debt, the school shall ensure that the student is not participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, or other federal programs, which would confer categorical eligibility for free school meals, or is not homeless, migrant, or in foster care, and would allow them to be certified without an application.
- For households that cannot afford to pay their school meal charges, the school will work with them to establish a payment plan.
- Letters are mailed on delinquent accounts of \$50.00 or over for paid meals, for \$10.00 for free and reduced meals. Charging an extra milk with their lunch or charging a milk to go with a lunch box is not allowed until the balance is paid.

Gifts or donated funds are accepted by the District for the purpose of offsetting delinquent student meal accounts. Individual student meal accounts are credited first to paid student accounts, next to reduced student accounts, and third to free student accounts. Accounts are chosen randomly from the delinquent accounts at the time of the specific donation.

Carry over unpaid meal debt:

All positive/negative balances at the end of the school year will carry over to the next school year.

- Negative balances must be cleared before the end of the school year. Grade cards will be held until the balance is paid.
- Graduating students must clear all debt prior to graduation. A student will not “walk” at graduation until all obligations are paid in full.
- Graduating students will have three options regarding positive balances:
 - The balance of their account will be transferred to a sibling attending Nashville District 49.
 - The balance may be donated for the benefit of another student.
 - Balances over \$5.00 will be refunded or families may contact the office to donate the funds.

If a student withdraws from school and has more than \$5.00 in their account, the household will be contacted to ask if they would like to receive full refund.