

Nerstrand Elementary School Policy #534
Independent Charter School District #4055
Adopted: 12/12/2022

#534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

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 of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student. 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. Student Accounts. Students have a meal account assigned to them through the Faribault Public Schools. When the balance reaches zero, a student may charge a reimbursable meal only. Once an account is negative, the Faribault Public Schools will follow their negative meal balance procedure to make the account whole. Payments can be online through the parent portal, at each school site, at Faribault Public Schools, or payments can be sent to the food service office.

B. State Lunch Aid. If the school district receives school lunch aid under Minnesota Statutes section 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.

C. Outstanding Account. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

D. Free and Reduced Meals. A student who has been determined to be eligible for free and reduced-price lunch always must be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.

E. Meal Charges. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school officials, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.

F. Alternative Meal Provision. Faribault Public Schools may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal will vary by grade level.

G. Negative Balance and ala Carte Items: When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.

H. Splitting payments. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

A. Low Account Notification. Faribault Public Schools will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.

B. Negative Balance Notification. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance. Once the account reaches a negative balance, Faribault Public Schools will follow the negative balance procedure. Families will be notified by phone, text, or letter based on the balance of the account.

C. No Stigmatization. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

A. Account Notification. Faribault Public Schools 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. Debt Collection. Faribault Public Schools 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. Referral to Superintendent. Negative balances of more than \$60.00, not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the superintendent of Faribault Public Schools or superintendent's designee for collection. In some instances, the school district does use a collection agency to collect unpaid school meal debts after reasonable efforts first have been made by the school district to collect the debt. 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. Non-Staff Debt Collection. Faribault Public Schools may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

E. Restrictions and Limitations. Faribault Public Schools will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

A. Policy Communication. 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. Posting Policy. Nerstrand Elementary School will post this policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

C. Vendor to Receive Policy. If the school district contracts with a third party for its meal services, it will provide the vendor with its school meals policy. The school district will ensure that any third-party provider with whom the school district enters into either an original or modified contract after July 1, of each fiscal year, adheres to the school district's school meals policy.