

Business and Non-Instructional Operations**Food Service****Lunch Charging**

Connecticut's school Child Nutrition Programs consist of the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, After School Snack and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs. It is a local decision as to in which programs the District selects to participate. These programs are federally funded and are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. At the State level, the school Child Nutrition Programs are administered by the Connecticut State Department of Education, which operates the program through agreements with the local school food authorities.

The school nutrition program is an extension of the school's educational programs and it is the District's vision to have a partnership among students, staff, school family and the community in offering access to and providing nutritious meals, which are attractively presented at an affordable price. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

The Board of Education (Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced price meals to eligible elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. Applicants for such meals are responsible to pay for meals until the application for the free or reduced price meals is completed and approved. A new application needs to be completed each school year. All applications for free and reduced price lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program.

Although not required by law, because of the District's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal. The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid. Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults (teachers, staff and visitors). Adults are not allowed to charge meals and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, any charging of meals must be consistent with this policy and any accompanying regulations. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall develop regulations designed to effectively and respectfully address family responsibility for unpaid meals.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the Food Services Manager/Director and/or the applicable school Principal for assistance. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced price lunch to apply.

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Dissemination of Policy

On an annual basis, all families will be notified of this policy. Written notification will be provided at the start of the school year or upon enrollment in Hamden Public Schools.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also will be informed of this policy.

The District's school food authority shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school staff or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.

(cf. 3542 - Food Service)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

10-215a Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

10-215b Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

State Board of Education Regulations

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016

Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education "Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to No-paying Full and Reduced Price Students"

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No. 20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Legal References (continued)

USDA Guidance:

- SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies"
- SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment"
- SP 57-2016 "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A"
- SP 58-2016 "2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools"

First Reading: April 10, 2018

Policy adopted: May 2018

HAMDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Hamden, Connecticut

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Lunch Charging Regulation

Hamden Public School's Food Service Department utilizes a computerized system to manage students' personal meal accounts. Students are expected to maintain a positive balance to avoid delinquent debt. The system allows parents to pre-pay for meals, view transaction history, and create low-balance email alerts.

For times when students do not have a positive balance in their meal account or have forgotten or lost their money, the Board of Education has established a system to allow a student to charge a meal. In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals.

The District uses MySchoolBucks.com, which is designed to extend families helpful services related to a child's school account information. These services include the ability to view transaction history for up to 30 days, set-up low-balance email alerts, and make payments on-line directly to a lunch account. Negative balance status can be avoided by making a payment on the MySchoolBucks.com website.

Definitions

"Delinquent Debt" are unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

Elementary Students

1. The District shall maintain a "no charging policy." The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary at the elementary level. The charge/no charge policy will be strictly enforced to eliminate unnecessary debt within the School Food Service Program.
2. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and who does not bring a meal from home may charge up to a negative balance of \$8.00. When the charge limit is reached, the student will receive the main lunch offering each day, in accordance to their dietary restriction, and the cost of this meal will be charged to the child's meal account. This practice will continue until the outstanding balance is paid in full. A-la-carte items may not be charged.
3. When a charge has occurred, a written notification shall be sent home to parents.

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Elementary Students (continued)

4. All credited meals must be repaid. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires that the household pays all delinquent student debts no later than June 30th to ensure that students' accounts are closed. These student meal accounts must be at a zero balance for the next school year.

Middle School Students

As a courtesy and convenience, Hamden Middle School extends credit to students to purchase lunch, with the understanding that there are occasional moments when lunch money is lost, forgotten, or inadvertently overlooked. We ask that "charging privileges" be exercised as infrequently as possible and not used as a payment practice. Middle School students may borrow funds from the main office to pay for a single lunch with the expectation that the money borrowed will be repaid the next day. Should the funds not be repaid, the student may not borrow again. When a charge has occurred, a written notification shall be sent home to parents. We recommend that parents monitor the balance in their child's lunch account to avoid the need to borrow. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires all delinquent student debts to be paid no later than June 30th.

High School Level

High school students are responsible to make payment for their lunch in advance or in the lunch line. Special circumstances will be considered on an individual basis for charge privileges.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The school food authority is encouraged to consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs which would be incurred to achieve those collections.

Regulation adopted: April 10, 2018

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