Adopted: 3/26/18 ***JCC Amended***

Revised: 11.24.25

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 a la carte items or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE

A. The goal of Jackson County Central's Nutrition Services Department is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs.

B. Families can apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits at any time during the school year by completing an application. Applications can be found in the Husky Howl newsletter that is sent home prior to school starting, at any of the schools' offices, during back to school orientation, or can be printed off online on the district's website. Families can reapply for meal benefits anytime during the school year if household income or family size changes. Families are financially responsible for all student purchases made prior to the official approval of their application. Applications must be filled out every year.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

Funds should be maintained in student meal accounts to minimize the possibility that a student is without money on any given day. All remaining funds in the student's meal account at the end of the school year will be carried over to the next school year. Payment options include the following:

A. Pay online: Information for how to pay online will be posted on the district's website and also be in the Husky Howl newsletter.

B. Check: Student's name(s) must be written in memo line. If payment is for one or more student, the payment must specify how funds should be divided.

C. Cash: Should be sent in an enclosed envelope with student's name.

D. Meal payment locations:
    - Elementary: Payment box in school office or give payment to teacher
    - Middle School: Payment in the school's office or give to cashier
    - High School: Payment in the school's office or give to cashier

E. Payment transfers between members in a household will be done at request of the parent.

III. CHARGE PROCEDURE

A. The process below is followed if the student meal account has insufficient funds to pay for the meals.

Full-Pay Middle and High School Students

- Students are encouraged to eat breakfast at home and bring a sack lunch if over -$15.00.
- The school may elect to serve an alternate lunch meal to students that are -$15.00 and over. Food services will provide a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, free of charge, up to three times or until a payment has been made. After the three times, the student will need to provide their own meals from home.
- Negative balances must be paid in full prior to purchasing a la carte items and there must be sufficient funds in the account to cover a la carte items being purchased.
- Students cannot use anyone else's Personal Identification Number (PIN) for purchase of food items.
- Negative balance information may be sent to appropriate administrators including, but not limited to, Principals, Social Workers, Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent, and School Liaisons.

Full-Pay Elementary Students

- Students are encouraged to eat breakfast at home and bring a sack lunch if over -$15.00.
- Negative balances must be paid in full prior to purchasing a la carte items.
- Students cannot use anyone else's Personal Identification Number (PIN) for purchase of food items.
- Negative balance information may be sent to appropriate administrators including, but not limited to, Principals, Social Workers, Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent, and School Liaisons.

Free and Reduced-Price Student Eligibility

- Students with Free or Reduced-Price eligibility can receive a free breakfast and free lunch daily. (Note: all kindergarten students receive breakfast at no cost regardless of meal eligibility status)
- Students with a negative account balance are not allowed to charge a la carte items.
- Students cannot use anyone else's Personal Identification Number (PIN) for purchase of food items.

- Negative balance information may be sent to appropriate administrators including, but not limited to, Principals, Social Workers, Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent, and School Liaisons.

B. Free School Meals Program

1. The free school meals program is created within the Minnesota Department of Education

2. Each School that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage below the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate via the Community Eligibility Provision must participate in the free school meals program.

3. Each school that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage at or above the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate must participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision in order to participate in the free school meals program.

4. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:

(1) participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and

(2) provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.

(3) A student who has been determined eligible for free and reduced-price meals must always be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.

C. 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 official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.

D. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.

E. 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.

F. A student may purchase a second breakfast at the nonprogram price if the student has already selected a reimbursable breakfast.

G. A student may purchase a second lunch at the nonprogram price if the student has already selected a reimbursable lunch.

IV. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

A. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in school meal program, including, but not limit to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing nonreimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families using the following methods:

- Emails and/or text messages will be sent out via the student management system once a week when school is in session. Automated messages are set up to alert families when a student is negative. Full-paid students and staff members will receive a low balance reminder when the account falls below $15.00.
- Parents are also able to set up personalized alerts in the student management system's Parent Portal.
- Cashiers at the Middle and High School will provide a verbal notice at the point of sale when the balance is $10.00 or less.
- Payment reminder slips will be sent home weekly to elementary age students when balance is negative or falls below $10.00.
- Phone calls and personalized emails may be sent to parents when the balance is -$10.00 or greater by Administrative Assistants, Food Service Director, or Principal.

V. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

A. The school district 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 or reduced-price meals for their children. Where appropriate, funds may be transferred between student accounts within the same household.

B. The school district 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. Negative balances will be carried over year to year until paid in full.

D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

E. The school district will not impose any other restrictions 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.

VI. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

A. 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. The school district will post this policy on the school district's website, or the website of the organization where the meal is served, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

C. 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, 2021, adheres to the school district's school meals policy.

Legal References: *Minn. Stat.* § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid, Food Service Accounting)
42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A