

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #877 POLICY

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose

INDEX TITLE STUDENTS SERIES NO. 500

POLICY TITLE School Meals Policy CODE NO. 534

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 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 school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students are issued a meal account when they enroll at Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools. It is the parent(s)' or guardian's responsibility to make sure adequate funds are available in student meal accounts each day for breakfast and or lunch.
- 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 participated 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:
 - a. participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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. Meal payments may be made at the student's school by cash or check or online <https://bhmmn.infinitecampus.org/campus/portal/parents/buffalo.jsp>
- D. 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.
- E. The school district does not provide alternate meals to students who currently have meal charge debt. Students are provided a regular reimbursable meal.
- F. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge any ala carte items with the exception of a second entrée.
- G. Meal accounts are 'family' accounts and are not designated individually by student. Certain family situations require separate sibling accounts and will be set up upon request. In the case of separate accounts, 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.
- H. Families may apply for free or reduced-price meal benefits at any time during the school year. Families need to apply annually for benefits. Applications are available online on the district website (www.bhmschools.org), at the Food Service Department Office, or may apply online at the Parent Portal. If the household size or income changes during the year, families can reapply.
- I. A student may purchase a second breakfast at the nonprogram price if the student has already selected a reimbursable breakfast.
- J. A student may purchase a second lunch at the nonprogram price if the student has already selected a reimbursable lunch.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of their household account balance when the amount reaches \$20.00. Families will be notified by automated email and text messages.
- C. 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, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing nonreimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps or pins.

IV. 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.
- 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 of more than \$50.00 not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the superintendent 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. 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 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.
- F. The district utilizes a collection agency to pursue unpaid balances exceeding

\$50.00 after initial collection attempts by mail have been made. Accounts are turned over to the agency if payment is not received within 20 days of the district’s mailed notice. This process helps ensure consistent collection of funds owed to the district while maintaining clear and fair timelines for families to respond. The collection agency works within applicable laws to recover these outstanding balances on behalf of the district.

V. 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.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37, (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, (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

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DATE OF ADOPTION June 24, 2019

DATE OF REVIEW July 14, 2025

DATE OF APPROVAL July 14, 2025