

BOARD POLICY

No. 5540

5000 STUDENTS

5540 School Lunch Charging

The Regional School District 8 Board of Education (the “Board”) is a sponsor of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services’ Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in order to provide nutritious foods to students in Regional School District 8.

Charging Meals

The District uses an automated prepayment system for student meal accounts. The District Food Service Department will verbally inform a student when they have a low account balance, or when they have begun charging meals. Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the District’s Business Office and/or the applicable school Principal for information regarding an application for free or reduced price meals.

Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge meals and will be informed of their right to purchase a meal, which excludes a la carte items, for any school breakfast, lunch or other feeding.

The Board prohibits publicly identifying or shaming a student for any unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student; or
- Designating a specific meal option for the student; or
- Otherwise taking any disciplinary action against the student.

Parents/guardians of students who charge lunches will receive a notification letter through the U.S. mail or via electronic mail, or they will be contacted via telephone. Communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a student’s unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries, an application for free or reduced price meals and the Department of Social Services’ supplemental nutrition assistance program, and a link to the District’s or town’s website that lists any community services available to town residents.

In the event a student’s unpaid meal charges are equal to or more than the cost of thirty (30) meals the parents/guardians of such student will be referred to the District’s homeless education liaison.

The Board may accept gifts, donations or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school lunches, breakfasts or other such feeding.

Collection of 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 District shall consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs which would be incurred to achieve those collections.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the District during the school year. This policy shall be provided to all District 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 contracted by families with unpaid meal charges shall be informed of this policy.

The District shall maintain, to the extent required by law, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and District staff responsible for policy enforcement.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-214 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees (as amended by PA 21-46)

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.

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).

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"

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