

UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

534

Approved 6/26/17

I. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of this policy is to ensure is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools' goal 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 program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
- B. It is the policy of Zumbrota-Mazeppa Schools to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
- C. A Point of Sale (POS) software system is used for the school lunch program.
 - i. Each student will have his/her own individual Student Account and will have an individual account number.
 - ii. Check and cash deposits can be received at the individual student's school and with the District Food Service Office. Checks should be made payable to the Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District.
 - iii. Separate checks should be written for students at separate schools. To insure credit to the proper account, the student's full name should be written on the check on the memo line. The minimum deposit must be \$20.
 - iv. If sending cash with a student, place in a sealed envelope, along with the student's name and lunch account number. *We are not responsible for lost, unidentified, or stolen cash. The minimum deposit must be \$20.*
 - v. If money needs to be transferred from one sibling's account to another, then a note or phone call from home is needed. The only exception will be if a student's sibling has money that can be transferred in order to avoid receiving an alternative meal.
 - vi. Students must have money deposited in their lunch account in order to purchase extra entrees or extra milk, regardless of eligibility status (paid, free, or reduced). This is also applied to ala carte.
 - vii. We cannot make change for cash at the schools so please utilize the lunch account for all purchases.
- D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, applications are available in the primary, elementary, middle/high school, and the district offices, the school webpage, and the food service

office during school hours. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

III. CHARGE POLICY/NOTIFICATION OF ACCOUNT STATUS

- A. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, the following policies will be enforced:
- i. High School and Middle School Students:
 - a. The lunchroom computer will give the cashier a “low balance” warning whenever a student’s individual account is \$20 or below. At this point, there will be an email generated and sent to the parent/guardian. The email will go out on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons.
 1. Day 1: Students are told the account balance is low and they need to bring money to the Point of Sale person or the Food Service Director.
 2. Day 2: Students are told the account balance is low and they need to bring money. A letter or email will be sent to the parents/guardian.
 3. Day 3: If the student does not bring money and the cashier still gets the “low balance” message, a verbal will be given to the student and a letter/email will be given to the parent/guardian again. Students will not be able to purchase ala carte items if there is not sufficient funds available in the student account. This will happen when the account reaches \$0.
 4. Day 4: Students with an account that is too low to make a purchase will be offered an “alternative meal” (see alternative meal information below). This will happen at \$-5.00.
 - b. Low balance statements are tracked daily. The statement will be given to advisory teachers to give the student directly or there will be emails sent to the household. If a negative balance persists, there will be a phone call to the home, followed by a letter from the Superintendent.
 - c. Parents and/or students can check their account balance by calling the Food Service Office at 507-732-1417 or by creating a login through the school district in the Infinite Campus Portal to view the paperless version of the account.
 - ii. Elementary and Primary Students:
 - a. The lunchroom computer will give the cashier a “low balance” warning whenever a student’s individual account is at \$20 or below.
 1. Day 1: Students are told the account balance is low and they need to bring money.
 2. Day 2: If the student does not bring money and the cashier still gets the “low balance” message, student is told the account balance is low and they need to bring money.
 3. Day 3: If the student does not bring money and the cashier still gets the “low balance” message, the student is told the account balance is low and they need to bring money. When the account

reaches \$0, a statement of account will go home with the student.

4. Day 4: If the account balance is too low and the negative balance persists, the student is offered an “alternative meal” (see alternative meal information below).
 - a. Statements for elementary students with a low or zero balance will be sent home as needed. Parents should check their student’s backpack for lunch account statements. Please be aware that there will also be emailed reminders sent to the household.
 - b. If there is a persistent negative balance, a letter will be sent from the Superintendent’s Office.
 - c. Parents/guardians can check their account balance by calling the Food Service Office at 507-732-1417 or by creating a login through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal to view the paperless version of the lunch account.
- B. Assistance from county social services may be requested from the school social worker for possible educational neglect when the above procedures are unsuccessful.
- C. Alternative Meal:
- i. Paid students with a balance that is too low to purchase the regular lunch meal, cannot eat the regular meal until money is put into their lunch account. They will be offered an alternative meal of a cheese sandwich, fruit & veggie bar, and milk. The student will have the opportunity to call home during the lunch period to request to have money added to their account. The alternative meal will be the offered meal until there is a sufficient lunch account balance. Students eligible for free or reduced price meals will be allowed to receive the regular meal, but must have money in their account to purchase extra entrees or extra milk. Payment arrangements can be made with the district, if needed.
- D. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES
- i. 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 and reduced-price meals for their children
 - ii. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
 - iii. After thirty (30) days of a negative balance, a follow up call to county social services will be made. County social services are required to investigate claims of “educational neglect” when contacted by a school district. It is the position of the Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District that families that can afford to make payments, yet are refusing to provide their child with basic needs such as a school lunch, are engaging in “educational neglect”.

IV. 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:
 - a. All households at or before the start of each school year;

- b. Students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - c. All school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district may post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.