

POLICY

2018

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Non-Instructional
Business Operations

SUBJECT: MEAL CHARGE POLICY

I. Purpose

The goal of the Gilbertsville Mt. Upton CSD is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day.

The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances. Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school district. This policy will establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Gilbertsville Mt. Upton CSD. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular and reduced priced school breakfast, lunch and snack (if applicable) meals only. The Gilbertsville Mt. Upton CSD provides, as a courtesy to students, the option to charge a meal in the event that they forget or lose their lunch money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Cost of School Meals

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch each day. A la carte purchases must be paid or prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast for \$.25 and lunch for \$.25 each day. A la carte purchases must be paid or prepaid.

Full Pay Students – Students will pay for meals at the school’s published paid meal rate each day. A la carte purchases must be paid or prepaid

III. WHEN MEALS ARE NOT PAID FOR AT THE POINT OF SALE, THE FOLLOWING RULES APPLY:

All students upon the student’s request, regardless of whether their parent or legal guardian has unpaid charges for school meals and regardless of their ability to pay at the register, shall be provided with a school meal of the student’s choice from the available reimbursable meal choices for that school day.

The District shall only be required to provide access to reimbursable meals, not a la carte items, adult meals, or other items.

Charging of items outside the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited. All such items must be paid or prepaid.

The student’s parent or guardian may provide written permission to the District to withhold a meal.

There will be no ADULT charging (employees, volunteers, or visitors) of school meals.

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IV. TRAINING

All staff responsible for serving students meals or collecting money for such meals will be trained to ensure that the District's procedures are carried out correctly. Such training shall include receipt and review of this plan at the time of the employee's hire, with retraining as needed. Training shall also include communication strategies to minimize stigma or embarrassment to students denied a la carte items.

V. MONEY OWED FOR UNPAID MEALS:

A. Parents/Guardians are responsible for meal payment to the food service program. Discreet notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to the parent/guardian at regular intervals during the school year. Parents will be given notice of the negative balance on their Student's account with weekly communication regarding the unpaid balance, which may include auto calls or letters.

B. The single payment. The District will work with families to develop a repayment schedule, where families are unable reasonable to pay the entire amount of any unpaid balance in a single payment

C. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families will be encouraged to apply for free or reduced price meals for their child, if applicable.

D. When a student owes money for five or more meals, the District shall:

1. Attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
2. Make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian to fill out a meal application; and
3. Contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal, and offer any other assistance that is appropriate.

E. The District will not publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means including, but not limited to:

1. Requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
2. Require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;
3. Require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals.
4. Take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees. The District will attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not

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use a debt collector as defined in section eight hundred three of the Federal; Consumer credit Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. Sec. 169322a; or

5. Discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.

F. Nothing in this plan is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt.

VI. A. Students/parents/guardians may pay for meals in advance via myschoolbucks.com or with a check payable to Gilbertsville Mt. Upton School Meals. Further details are available on our webpage at www.gmucsd.org. Funds should be maintained in the accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

B. Surplus balances will be rolled over for the student's benefit for the following school year.

C. Regarding funds for withdrawn and graduated students, a written or emailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Full –pay students who are graduating at the end of the school year will be given the option to transfer any balance to a sibling's account with a written request. Reduced eligible students will have surplus money returned.

D. Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Food Service Program.

E. Collection of owed balances will follow the above procedures for unpaid meals.

VII. ENROLLMENT IN THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCH PROGRAM:

At the beginning of each school year, The District shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or provide information in the packet of how to access the meal application on line and instructions for how parents can request a paper application at no cost.

The District upon request will provide assistance to families in completing an application for enrollment.

Where the District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-free meals, the District shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to Title 7,&245.6(d) of the Code of Federal Regulations; and

The District's School Liaison for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals in accordance with federal law.

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VIII. ANNUAL NOTIFICATION:

The District will provide notice to all parents and guardians on an annual basis, prior to the opening day of school, outlining the requirements of this policy. This policy shall also be published in an appropriate school-based publication, and posted on the District's website.

Approved: 10/18/2017
Updated/Approved: 07/11/2018

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