

NONINSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS AND BUSINESS SERVICES

Series 700

POLICY TITLE MEAL CHARGES

No. 710.4

In accordance with state and federal law, the Johnston Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

Payment of Meals

Each student is assigned a computerized meal account. Parents/Guardians pre-pay into a student's meal account by sending a check to the child's school, district office or paying on-line with debit/credit at the district website. During meal service, students enter a personal pin number or scan an ID Badge (if applicable) at the cash register. The computer debits and records purchases from the student's lunch account. The nutrition department closely monitors student accounts to prevent negative balances and changes as follows:

Elementary K-5:

- When a meal account balance reaches \$10.00 or less a written balance notification will be sent home with the student one time per week.
- When a meal account balance reaches zero dollars (\$0.00) a phone call will be made to parents one time per week.
- When a meal account reaches negative \$10.00 a Free and Reduced Meal application is sent to the parent along with a copy of the meal charging policy.
- When a meal account becomes negative by \$20.00 or more we suggest the parent to make arrangements for their student's lunch.

Secondary 6-12:

- When a meal account balance reaches \$5.00 or less, the cashier will verbalize the balance to the student.
- When a meal account balance reaches zero dollars (\$0.00) or less, the student is not allowed to charge extra's or ala carte.
- When a meal account balance falls below zero dollars (\$0.00) the student will be allowed to charge one meal per day.
- When a meal account becomes negative by \$10.00 or more students may pay cash or bring a lunch from home until funds are deposited into the account. A Free and Reduced Meal application will be sent to the parent along with the meal charging policy. There will be no charging when the account balance is below negative \$10.00.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Schools are encouraged to provide a reimbursable meal to students with outstanding meal charge debt.

Employees are not allowed to charge meals or ala carte items.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. However, the failure of the school district to notify families shall not relieve families' obligations to keep meal account balances current; nor shall it prevent the school district from being able to take all actions legally available to collect any delinquent account balances. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Negative balances of more than \$20.00, not paid prior to the end of the school year will be turned over to the Director of Nutrition Services or designee for collection. Options may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

Unpaid Student Meals Account

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

Communication of the Policy

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information was communicated to households and staff will be retained.

The Director of Nutrition Services or designee may develop an administrative process to implement this policy.

Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 *et seq.*
7 C.F.R. §§ 210 *et seq.*

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016).

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016).

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 57-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A (2016).

Iowa Code 283A.

281 I.A.C. 58.

Cross Reference: 710.1 School Food Program
710.2 Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility
710.3 Vending Machine

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