

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL/BUSINESS OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: MEAL CHARGE AND PROHIBITION AGAINST MEAL SHAMING POLICY

The goal of the Levittown Public Schools is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low- cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. 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 to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The policy will establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Levittown Public Schools in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast and lunch meals only. The Levittown Public Schools provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money.

As such, the goal of the Levittown School District (“District”) is to provide solutions to families having trouble paying for school meals by using the following methods:

- Reach out to families of eligible children
- Assist families with the school meal application process
- Make a payment convenient - online payment
- Provide payment reminders
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Free and Reduced Lunch applications will be mailed to all families in the summer. They will also be offered during student registration throughout the school year and will be available in the main offices and in the social workers’ offices in all schools. All School Food Administrators (SFAs) and School Food Employees/Professionals will provide a reimbursable meal to all students with negative balances. However, SFAs may prohibit a child certified for free meals from charging a la carte or extra items (e.g. a second milk or additional entrée), if the account is negative.

Access to Meals

- Free meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.
Reduced meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student’s parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the District to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

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- Full pay students will pay for meals at the District's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the District to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Minimizing Student Distress

- The Levittown Public Schools will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- The Levittown Public Schools will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- The Levittown Public Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- The Levittown Public Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

Ongoing Staff Training

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the State Education Department (SED) Webinar or a District's organized training program.
- Staff training will include ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.
- Parents/guardians will be notified by school personnel, calls, or letters from the Business Office that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted within 3 days of it being exhausted and then, no sooner than every 5 days thereafter.

Parent Outreach

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more unpaid meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- Staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- Staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of free or reduced meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the student to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.
- Business Office personnel will conduct direct certification through the New York Student Identification System (NYSSIS) to maximize free eligibility.

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- The District will use its administrative prerogative to complete an application on a student's behalf judiciously, but only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the student's parent/guardian. The District will complete the application using only available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- The District will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Prepaid Accounts

- Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via <https://www.myschoolbucks.com/ver2/login/getmain?requestAction=home> or with a check payable to Levittown Public Schools. Further details are available on the District's webpage at <http://www.levittownschoools.com>. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. To facilitate this, parents may opt into a service through MySchoolBucks which will remind them when funds in a student's account are low.
- Any remaining funds for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.
- To obtain a refund for a withdrawn or graduating student, a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in the student's account must be submitted to the Business Department. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer any remaining money to a sibling's account through a written request or a call made to (516) 434-7010. Unclaimed funds must be requested within once school year. After one year, unclaimed funds will become the property of the District.

Staff

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the district's food services. However, all purchases must be on a cash basis. Staff members will not be allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Ref: Child Nutrition Act of 1966, 42 USC §1779 & 1771
National School Lunch Act, 42 USC §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a); 1715 SED
Guideline Doc, Child Nutrition Prgm; "Establishing a Meal Charge Policy", Aug 20, 2005

Re-Adopted: July 11, 2012

Revised: December 12, 2018