

## New Kent County School District's Meal Charge Regulations

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of the school nutrition program.

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for School Food Authorities (SFA) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which would include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

You can find more information about this USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requirement at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges>.

This policy will establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the school division. The goals of this policy are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with division staff, division business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish policies that are age appropriate
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.

This policy prohibits school board employees from requiring a student who cannot pay for a meal at school or who owes a school meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for such meals or wear a wristband or hand stamp; and requires school board employees to direct any communication relating to school meal debt to the student's parent. Such policy may permit such communication to be made by a letter addressed to the parent to be sent home with the student.

### Requirements:

- On the first day of school parents need to send a lunch or lunch money with their child unless they have qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch in the previous school year as a student of New Kent County Public Schools.
- Students who have qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch in the previous school year as a student of New Kent County Public Schools will have 30 days from the first day of school to reapply for free or reduced meals. A free and reduced application must be turned in each school year.
- After the first 30 days of school the students who qualified the year before and have not submitted an application will be required to pay full price for meals. At that time, they will be allowed 1 charge for breakfast and 1 charge for lunch and then an alternative reimbursable breakfast and lunch will be provided until an application is processed or money is received. The parent is responsible for these charges.

- If a parent is sending in an application for free or reduced breakfast and lunch for the first time, the parent is responsible for debt incurred on the account until the application is processed. The student will only be allowed 1 charge for breakfast and 1 charge for lunch and then an alternative reimbursable breakfast and lunch will be provided. The parent is responsible for these charges.
- If a parent does not want to allow any charges, they need to notify the manager in the cafeteria or the school nutrition supervisor.
- Students who have qualified for free breakfast and lunch will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their meal account.
- If a student has qualified for free breakfast and lunch and has a negative balance on their account, any money provided to the cafeteria for their account must first be applied to the negative balance prior to being used for snacks.
- Students who have money to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at the time of service must be provided a meal. If the student intended to use the money for that day's meal, the SFA will not use the money to repay a negative balance or other unpaid meal charge debt.
- If a payment is found to have insufficient funds, the amount of the payment will be removed from the student's account. The parent will be notified by the New Kent County Treasurer's office. Once the parent has worked with the Treasurer and the payment has cleared, the funds will be added back to the student's account. The parent is responsible for charges that occur on the student account during this timeframe and the student will be offered up to two alternative meals for breakfast and lunch until the charges are paid.
- Parents need to consider that online payments may take up to 24 hours to be processed. If the student's account has a low or negative balance, students are encouraged to bring cash for their lunch or a copy of the online payment receipt.
- A maximum of one breakfast and one lunch can be charged if a student does not have money on their account. After the limit is reached they will be offered an alternative reimbursable breakfast (2 fruit, 2 grain and milk) and an alternative reimbursable lunch (warm cheese sandwich, 2 vegetables, 1 fruit and milk).
- An alternative reimbursable breakfast and lunch will only be allowed two times in a two week period. If it continues and all other means to communicate with parents do not work, social services will be contacted.
- Students will not be able to charge any meals beginning on May 1<sup>st</sup> of each school year. Beginning on April 15<sup>th</sup> of each school year, school nutrition will post this notice for students and parents in the school cafeterias and on the school website. This allows school nutrition to collect money owed before summer break.
- Account balances will be transferred to the next school year for a student or transferred to a younger sibling's account upon the student graduating. Account balances of \$20 or more may be refunded if requested in writing to the School Nutrition Supervisor.

**Communicating the Policy:**

- The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household by the beginning of the school year through distribution of required annual notifications and student back to school packets.
- School Nutrition Program (SNP) staff will receive training on meal charge policy and a record of the training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.
- Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the Federal Program Administrative Review.
- Any communication of a student’s debt will be directed to the parent or guardian. A letter addressed to the parent and sent home with the student is an acceptable form of communication.

**Notification to the Household of Low or Negative Balance in Student Cafeteria Account:**

- Parents can sign up on *MySchoolBucks.com* or download the free *MySchoolBucks* App onto their phone. The system will send notices to the email address provided by the parent when the accounts are below an amount set by the parent. Parents can create an account on *MySchoolBucks.com* to monitor their student account regardless of whether they pay online or send payments through the school cafeteria. Please note that anyone can create an account with *MySchoolBucks.com* utilizing the required student information (multiple households may view usage and receive notifications of the same student).
- School Nutrition may also send emails notifying parents of low or negative balances. These emails will be addressed to the parent email address in Power School. Parents may update this email address by contacting the school. School Nutrition *may* also send automated phone messages when your account balance is negative.
- Beginning on May 1<sup>st</sup> of each school year, School Nutrition will stop allowing charges to occur for the remainder of the school year. Letters will go home to parents of students who have a negative balance.

**Collection of Delinquent Meal Charge Debt:**

- Parents are encouraged to pay any balances owed by the end of each school year.
- Letters will go home to parents of students who owe money and phone calls will be made by the School Nutrition Supervisor prior to notifying the Executive Director of Budget and Finance.
- If payment is not received collection proceedings will occur.

**Assistance to Households:**

Households with questions or needing assistance may contact the school office where their student attends or the Supervisor of School Nutrition at (804) 966-8508.

Adopted: April 28, 2017  
Revised: August 7, 2018  
Revised: August 5, 2019

Ref.: Federal Regulation 2 CFR Part 200 Section 143 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.