

Braham Area Public Schools

Ind. School Dist. #314

Braham, MN 55006

Adopted: August 21, 2017

Updated: **March 16, 2020**

#534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

[Note: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016 requires all School Food Authorities (i.e., school districts) operating federal school meal programs to have a written and clearly communicated system to address unpaid meal charges by July 1, 2017. USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017 clarified that school districts could adopt a “policy” or “standard practice.” Although this document is styled as a “policy,” school districts may establish and implement a set of written procedures instead of a policy, provided that the written document explains how the school district will handle situations where students eligible to receive reduced-price or paid meals do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of their meals at the time of service. The policy or standard practice must be implemented throughout the school district.]

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district’s nutrition program and that 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 and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. The High School has 2 deposit boxes if paying by cash or check. One is located by the High School Office and the other is located in the Cafeteria under the menu board. Both of these deposit boxes will be emptied at 9:30 a.m. and ready for use in the lunch account that day.
 - Please write student name(s) and lunch numbers on payments.
 - We encourage all high school students to deposit their monies in the locked safe box as this will assure a faster lunch line and allow students more time to eat.
- B. Elementary School: Please give your teacher your lunch money. Please write student name(s) and lunch numbers on payments.
- C. You may also pay online with “My School Bucks”.
 - To access this service:
 - Go to the district website at www.braham.k12.mn.us
 - Click the District Tab then scroll to Food Services news and updates.
 - Click the mySchoolBucks link. (More detailed instructions available under this line.)
 - From this website you can create your account and add money to your child’s school meal account and receive low balance alerts. All you need is your child’s name, school, and student ID number.

- D. If the school district receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- E. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received. A meal will not be taken away from a student with an overdrawn account.
- F. The school district may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal (\$2.60) will be charged to the student's account or otherwise charged to the student.
- G. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item, or be allowed to purchase any ala carte items, but will be allowed to have a reimbursable meal through the regular lunch line(s).
- H. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the student's accounts. If not specified, Food Service Personnel will divide to each sibling as they see fit.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.
 - The parent/guardian of all PreK-12 students will be notified when the student account is at \$10.00 or less with www.myschoolbucks.com Automatic e-mails are sent out daily when balances are low. Parents that do not have e-mail accounts will be sent weekly notifications.
 - Students will be given verbal notification in line each day their account is \$10.00 or less.
 - If the student account is less than adequate (-\$13.00) or 5 days of meals to pay for breakfast and/or lunch, the student will be given an alternative meal. When the account is negative, the Brahm Food Service Department will call the family. If the household cannot be reached, another letter will be sent home either by mail or email.
 - After the third consecutive day of offering the alternative breakfast and lunch, the building principal/assistant principal will contact the household and review with them their responsibility to provide meals for their child(ren).
 - Assistance from county social services may be requested by the school social worker for possible neglect when above procedures are unsuccessful.
 - Alternative Meal: A milk and grain item will be offered at breakfast when the account balance is negative. A PB or cheese sandwich, vegetable, fruit and milk will be

offered at lunch. (While schools are not obligated to provide meals to children who forget their lunch money, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages schools to be flexible in this area; particularly with young children and children with disabilities who may be unable to take full responsibility for their money.)

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. Braham Area School District recognizes the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Proper nutritional intake is essential for adequate learning to occur.
- B. 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.
- C. Households may apply for free/reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are mailed out to all households in the school district prior to the school year and are included in enrollment packets. In addition, applications are available at both the elementary and high school food service departments.
- D. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- E. When a student has a zero or negative balance, the student will not be allowed to purchase ala carte, but will be allowed to have a reimbursable meal through the regular lunch lines.
- F. Negative balances of more than \$30.00, not paid prior to *the end of every month*, will be turned over to the Food Service Director for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be available to the public on the district Website.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4

42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)

7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)

7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)

USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)

USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)

USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A