

**PLAINEDGE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
CHARGING SCHOOL MEALS**

I. Purpose

The goal of the Plainedge School District 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, 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 intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Plainedge School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable lunch meals only. The Plainedge School District provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Policy

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may not have enough funds for a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the School District, the Board of Education will allow students who do not have enough funds to "charge" the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms in this policy. The School District shall not charge any interest or fees in connection with any meals charged. Nothing in this policy is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt.

Students whose parents or guardians have unpaid school meal fees shall not be shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meals fees. To that end, the School District shall provide each student with the student's meal of choice for that school day of the reimbursable meal choices, if the student requests one, regardless of unpaid school meal fees. A student's parent or guardian may provide written permission to the School District to withhold a meal in the event of unpaid meal charges in excess of those permitted herein.

As part of its efforts to decrease student distress or embarrassment connected with unpaid meal charges, the School District shall not:

- a. 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, requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
- b. 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;

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- c. 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;
- d. take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees. A school or school district may attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector; or
- e. discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.

To comply with State guidelines and maintain a system for accounting for charged meals, regarding both full and reduced-price meals, the Board of Education shall:

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, excluding extras, a la carte items, and snacks
2. all charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year
3. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals as well as collects repayments.
4. notify parents on a timely basis of outstanding charges by the automated telephone or electronic system or by mail
5. provide parents with an opportunity to establish a repayment schedule for outstanding meal charges.
6. determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals when a student owes money for five or more meals. The School District shall:
 - a. make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
 - b. 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 and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
 - c. 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.

Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student charged (received) the meal, not the day the charge is paid back. When charges are paid, these monies are not to be considered "a la carte" transactions, as a section on the daily cash report or deposit summary reads "charges paid." Students eligible for free meals shall not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases.

Families may apply for free-reduced price meals at any time during the school year. The School District's administration will discreetly notify parents or guardians of students who regularly have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts of the application process for free and/or reduced price meals. Information concerning the availability of free and reduced price meals will be provided to the parents or guardians of all students enrolled in the School District prior to the

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start of the school year. Parents or guardians will be advised that the application for free-reduced price meals is available on the School District's website and at all schools in the School District. www.plainedgeschools.org. If the School District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the school or School District shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in schools. Applications are mailed to all families prior to the start of the school year. In addition, applications are available at the School District's Administrative Offices.

The School District shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or if the school or school district chooses to use an electronic meal application, provide in school enrollment packets an explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost. In addition, the School District will send a letter home to all parents or guardians on an annual basis prior to the opening day of school and, in the case of transfer students at the time of transfer, outlining the requirements of this policy. The policy shall also be published in appropriate school and School District publications.

The school homeless liaisons shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure that homeless, foster, and migrant students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

The School District will provide training to staff concerning the procedures to be utilized in the event a student's unpaid meal charges exceed five (5) outstanding charges and the manner in which affected parents/guardians will be provided with assistance in establishing eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

Account Balances

Remaining funds will be carried over to the next school year. When students leave the district or graduate, the district will attempt to contact the parent or guardian to return remaining funds. Parents or guardians may request that funds be transferred to other students (e.g., siblings, unpaid accounts). All transfer requests must be in writing. Unclaimed funds remaining after six months shall be absorbed by the school meal account.

Staff

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the district's food services. However, all purchases must be paid for at the point of sale with cash or prepaid account. Staff members are not allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Revised: June 7, 2018

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FREE AND REDUCED PRICE FOOD SERVICES

The Plainedge School District shall take part in the National and State School Lunch Program and other food programs that may become available to assure that all children in the district receive proper nourishment. The Board recognizes the direct relationship between a child's proper nourishment and his/her ability to successfully concentrate on any task, and with that understanding, no pupil of the district shall be deprived of a "Type A" school lunch because he/she is economically disadvantaged.

The Superintendent of Schools has developed the following administrative procedures to implement the Free Lunch and Reduced-Price Lunch Program:

Notice of the availability of the free and reduced price meal programs will be provided to parents/guardians of students in the School District, local media, the local unemployment office and large employers experiencing layoffs in the area from which the School District draws its attendance. Any child who is a member of a family unit whose income is below the federally established scale shall be eligible to receive such services.

To apply for the free or reduced meal program:

- a. Application forms will be available on the School District's website and can be completed and submitted at any time during the year. Information will be provided to parents/guardians of all students prior to the start of each school year and upon enrollment in the District. Such information will include a plain summary explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost.
- b. Completed forms must be submitted to the Child Nutrition Office of the school which the student attends prior to any determination of eligibility.
- c. The parent or guardian will be informed of the determination by the Child Nutrition Office within one (1) week of receiving a properly completed application.
- d. If a school or school district becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the school or school district shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in schools.
- e. The School District's homeless liaison(s) shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure that homeless, foster, and migrant students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

In the event a student owes money for five or more meals in accordance with the School District's Charging School Meals Policy, the School District shall:

- a. make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;

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- b. 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 and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
- c. require a school or school district to 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.

Applications will be kept confidential.

Upon written request the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will hear appeals of determinations regarding such services in compliance with federal regulations governing the National School Lunch Program.

In addition, in order to reach students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals and to comply with state law, three times per school year the School Lunch Manager will review the list made available by the State Education Department of children ages three (3) to eighteen (18) who are in households receiving federal food assistance or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to identify students within the School District. The School District will send a notice to those families apprising them of their student's eligibility to participate in the school meal programs without further application. Parents may decline participation by informing the School District in writing. If the Service is declined, the student will be removed from eligibility list.

Children in Head Start, or who have been determined to be homeless, migrant or runaway, or in foster care can be directly certified to participate in the School District free and reduced price meal program. The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee will develop implementing regulation.

The Building Principal, in conjunction with the School Lunch Manager, will establish meal time procedures that both protect the anonymity of the student and allow for proper accounting.

Cross-ref: 5405 Student Wellness
8505 Charging School Meals

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