

MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with state and federal law, the Highland 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

Highland Community School District utilizes Family Meal Accounts eliminating the need for parents or guardians to deposit money into individual accounts. All students and adults that are registered as part of a family charge to one Family Meal Account. When the balance reaches \$0.00, each student on the account may charge no more than five (5) reimbursable lunch meals to this account. If the account has not been paid in full after five (5) lunches, students will be offered an alternative lunch. The student will continue to accrue meal charges to their account during this time. Students with outstanding meal charge debt shall be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

Families can add money to their student account in several ways:

- The district accepts credit / debit cards for payments on campus or by accessing the district's online payment system through the district website.
- Families may also send a check or cash with their student to give to their building secretary. If sending cash, please enclose it in an envelope and write the students name on the outside of the envelope.

Free and Reduced Meals

We encourage families to apply for free and reduced meals if providing lunch money is a burden to the family. Applications may be obtained at any district office or by accessing the Highland Highlites on the district's website. New applications are required for each school year and applications may be submitted at any point in the year if a household experiences a change in financial circumstances. Certification for free or reduced price school meals remains in effect for the duration of the school year and 30 operating days into the following school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first. It is important to note that if your child is certified to receive free or reduced meals this includes both breakfast and lunch meals. A la carte items and snack items are not covered by this program and a student must have a positive balance in their account to purchase those items.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases.

Employee Meals & A la Carte Purchases

Employees may use a Family Meal Account for meals and a la carte purchases. When an account reaches \$0.00 an employee will be allowed to charge two (2) meals into the negative and then will not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid.

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A la Carte Purchases

Middle school and high school students have the option to purchase a la carte entrees and snacks. Students must have a positive balance in their meal account to purchase a la carte entrees and snacks. If a parent does not wish for their child to charge breakfast, a la carte entrees, or snack items to their meal account a block or a spending limit can be placed on the students account by contacting the Food Service Director or School Secretary. If a student has a low balance and the parent wishes for the student to be able to purchase a la carte or snack the same day we encourage them to make a deposit online before 9 am or to bring money to the high school office before the first bell rings.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Daily emails are sent to all families when the account balance are low and continue until the account is brought up to date. Additionally, paper notices are sent home with elementary students while ensuring a coordinated effort to communicate with families at all levels to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Negative balances, not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be notified via email at the end of the school year. Negative balances of \$25.00 or more will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

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 superintendent 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

NOTE: The IASB sample policy is drafted to be consistent for all grade levels. However, local boards may vary the meal charge policy for elementary, middle, and high schools. Districts should update the policy accordingly if they wish to delineate meal charge practices based on the grade level of students.

NOTE: If the district elects to provide alternate meals for students, the alternate meal must contain components available to all students and be provided in the same manner as meals are provided to other students. Additionally, the district is expected to accommodate special dietary needs when a child's disability restricts their diet.

NOTE: The Iowa Department of Education has tools and resources available to help districts with the school nutrition program and meal charge policy implementation and review. Please visit the "[School Meals](#)" section of the Iowa Department of Education's website.

NOTE: School districts must follow appropriate debt collection practices when trying to recover unpaid meal charges.

Adopted: **August 14, 2017**

Reviewed

Revised **December 13, 2021**