

THE CENTER SCHOOL POLICY

Meal Charges/Outstanding Food Service Bill

The School has established a meal charge program to charge students for lunch. Collection of any payment for a meal charge program account that is in arrears shall be addressed in accordance with provisions of this Policy.

The School recognizes a student may forget to bring lunch or money to purchase a meal on a school day. In this circumstance, the food service program will provide the student a meal. Emails are sent out weekly to parents for students with lunch account balances less than \$5.00, requesting parents to put funds in the student's account. Students with negative balances greater than \$25.00 will be denied snacks and seconds.

Parents are also encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price school meals. The School will contact the student's parent and have the parent fill out an application for the school lunch program; and to offer assistance with the application; determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school lunch; and offer any other appropriate assistance. The school may provide the application and information electronically through the means by which the school communicates with parents electronically. The application and information shall be in a language the parent understands.

The school shall not:

1. Publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or whose school meal bill is in arrears. (For example, by requiring the student to sit at a separate table or wear a wristband, hand stamp, or identifying mark or by serving the student an alternative meal);
2. Require a student who cannot pay for a school meal or whose school meal bill is in arrears to do chores or other work to pay for the school meal; or
3. Require a student to discard a school meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for a school meal or because money is owed for previously provided meals.

The school shall direct communications about a student's school meal bill being in arrears to the parent and not the student. The school's contact with the parent may be via email or telephone call. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 shall prohibit the school from sending a student home with a letter addressed to a parent. If the student's meal bill is in arrears, but the student has the money to purchase a meal on a subsequent school day, the student will be provided a meal with payment and the food

service program will not use the student's payment to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that school day's meal.

When a parent's routine failure to provide lunch is reasonably suspected to be indicative of child abuse or neglect, the Principal or designee shall immediately report such suspicion to the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency as required in N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10. Such reporting shall not be delayed to accommodate a parent's meeting with the Principal or designee.

Students receiving free meals will not be denied a meal even if they accrued a negative balance from other purchases in the bistro.

In accordance with N.J.S.A 18A:33-21b., at the beginning of each school year, and upon initial enrollment in the case of a student enrolling during the school year, the school shall provide to the parent of each student:

1. Information on the National School Lunch Program;
2. An application to apply for the school lunch program and instructions for completing the application; and
3. Information on the rights of students and their families under N.J.S.A. 18A:22-21 et seq.

The school's liaison for the education of homeless children shall coordinate with school personnel to ensure that a homeless student receives free school meals and is monitored according to the school policies pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21c.

The school shall report at least biannually to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture the number of students who are denied school lunch in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21a. and this Policy.

The school may post this Policy on the school's website provided there is a method in place to ensure this Policy reaches all households without access to a computer or the Internet.

This Policy shall also be provided to all school and food service staff responsible for the enforcement of this Policy, including school administrators to ensure this Policy is supported.

The food service program will comply with all meal charge policy requirements of the United States N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.