

CHARGING OF SCHOOL MEALS AND PROHIBITION AGAINST SHAMING

The Board of Education of the Great Neck Public Schools authorizes the utilization of a point of sale system for the purpose of providing parents/guardians of students enrolled in the District with the ability to fund school meals, as well as identifying and recording all meals provided. The District encourages parents/guardians to avail themselves of this system which allows for automatic replenishment when a balance reaches a certain set amount. Remaining funds in a student's school meal account at the end of a school year will be carried forward into the next school year. When a student ceases attendance in the District and/or graduates from the District, the District will refund any funds remaining in the student's account to the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians may request, in writing, that said remaining funds be transferred to a student who remains enrolled in the District. Unclaimed funds remaining after ninety (90) days will be retained in the school meal account.

The Board recognizes that, on occasion, students may not have sufficient funds available for the purchase of a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, the Board will allow students who do not have enough funds the option to "charge" the cost of meals to be paid back subject to the terms in this policy. Parents/guardians will be notified annually that they have the right to opt out of charging privileges. 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. Students eligible for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a prior negative balance.

- Only regular, reimbursable meals, and only what is on the published menu may be charged;
- No snacks may be charged;

Students who cannot pay for a meal or have unpaid meal debt will not be publicly identified or stigmatized by any means or have any outstanding meal debt discussed in the presence of other students. If requested by the student, the District will provide a meal of the student's choosing from the reimbursable meal choices regardless of unpaid school meal fees.

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

1. require that a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to wear a wristband or hand stamp;
2. require that a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;

3. 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;
4. 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 will not use a debt collector.

Unpaid meal charges are a financial burden to the District and taxpayers and can negatively affect the school program. In order to maintain a system of accounting for charged meals, both full and reduced price, that complies with New York State guidelines, and to establish a procedure for handling unpaid meal charges, the District will:

1. discretely notify parents/guardians of students with negative balances of at least five meals in a timely manner by the use of an automated telephone or electronic system or by mail of outstanding charges.
2. offer repayment plans, and take other actions that do not result in harm or shame to the child, until unpaid charges are paid.
3. determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals in accordance with *Policy 8520 Free and Reduced Price Meal Services*, by:
 - a. making every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
 - b. making at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent/guardian to have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
 - c. contacting the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, to determine if there are other issues within the causing the insufficient funds and to offer appropriate support.

If a parent/guardian regularly fails to provide meal money and does not qualify for free or reduced price meals, the District may take other actions as appropriate.

If the District's Food and Nutrition Services Office identify that a family may be in violation of this policy by accumulating an outstanding balance greater than \$25, they will discretely notify the parent/guardian of the balance and the process to refill the account. This notification will continue regularly until the account is replenished, and may continue into the next school year.

Information concerning the availability of free and reduced price meals will be provided to the parents/guardians of all students enrolled in the District prior to the start of the school year as follows:

- Applications will be provided to all families prior to the start of the school year, and will be available at the District's Food and Nutrition Services Office.
- The District will provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet.

- If the District chooses to use an electronic meal application, an explanation of the electronic meal application process with instructions for how parents/guardians may request a paper application at no cost will be provided in school enrollment packets.
- Parents/guardians will be advised that the application for free or reduced price meals is available on the District's website at: <https://www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/cms/lib/NY02208059/Centricity/Domain/39/ApplicationFreeReducedInstructions.pdf> and at all schools in the District.
- Families may apply for free reduced price meals at any time during the school year.

The District will communicate to all parents on an annual basis, prior to the opening day of school and to families transferring into the District during the year, notifying them of the requirements of this policy. The policy will also be published in appropriate school and District publications. All staff involved in implementing and enforcing this policy will also be notified of these requirements and their responsibilities. The District's enrollment process will include the application process for free and reduced price meals. If the District becomes aware that a student is so eligible, it will file an application for the student. Staff responsible for assisting foster, homeless and migrant students (including unaccompanied migrant youth) will coordinate with District Food and Nutrition Services staff to ensure such students receive free school or reduced price meals. The District's homeless liaison(s) will coordinate with the District Food and Nutrition Services office to make sure that homeless, foster, and migrant students (including unaccompanied migrant youth) receive free school meals, in accordance with Federal law.

The 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;
- the manner in which assistance will be provided to affected parents/guardians for establishing eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

Staff

In accordance with Federal law, staff members are allowed to purchase food from District food services. However, all purchases must be on a cash basis. Staff members will not be allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Great Neck Public Schools

Adopted: 6/16/14

Amended: 7/5/17; 6/18/18; 8/28/18; 4/7/21; 2/16/22