

CHARGING OF SCHOOL MEALS AND PROHIBITION AGAINST SHAMING

The Board of Education recognizes that, on occasion, students may forget to bring meal money to school. 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.

- Only regular meals, and only what is on the menu may be charged;
- No snacks may be charged;
- A computer-generated point of sale system will be used for identifying and recording all charged meals, as well as for collecting repayments.

Students who cannot pay for a meal or who have unpaid meal debt will not be publicly identified or stigmatized. District staff will not discuss a student’s unpaid meal debt in front of other students. The District will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. However, the District may discretely notify secondary students of their account balances, and why certain items (e.g., à la carte, etc.) could not be provided with charged meals.

The District will discretely notify parents/guardians of students with negative balances of at least five meals to determine if the student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals. Attempts to reach the parent/guardian will be made in order to assist them in the application process for free or reduced price meals, to determine if there are other issues within the household 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 school food service authorities 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. Failure to replenish an outstanding balance may result in the curtailment of a parent’s electronic access to student records.

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 will coordinate with food services staff to ensure such students receive free school meals.

Unpaid meal charges are a financial burden to the District and taxpayers and can negatively affect the school program. All schools will maintain a system for accounting for charged meals that follows New York State guidelines. The District will attempt to recover unpaid meal charges before the end of the school year, but may continue efforts into the next school year. The District will notify parents/guardians of unpaid meal charges at regular intervals, and may engage in collection activities by District staff, which do not involve debt collectors as defined in Federal law (15 USC §1692a), and may not charge fees or interest. The District will offer repayment plans, and may take other actions that do not result in harm or shame to the child, until unpaid charges are paid. As a last attempt to recover unpaid meal charge balances, at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools or designee, a student's participation in various school sponsored events/activities, including but not limited to receipt of a high school parking pass, a class yearbook, a cap/gown and/or participation in a graduation/moving-up ceremony, may be withheld.

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/guardian to return remaining funds. Parents/guardians may request, in writing, that funds be transferred to other students (e.g., siblings, unpaid accounts).

In accordance with Federal law, the District is not permitted to extend credit for meal purchases to staff.

Great Neck Public Schools

Adopted: 6/16/14

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