

## **SPENCERPORT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEAL CHARGING AND PROHIBITION AGAINST MEAL SHAMING PLAN**

It is the District's goal to provide students with access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/guardian has unpaid meal charges is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal charges.

Unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the District. The intent of this plan is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress, or embarrass students. The provisions of this plan pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

Students and families should also review District Policy 5660: Meal Charging and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming.

### **Access to Meals**

- a) Free meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.
- b) Reduced meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice at no charge and lunch of their choice at no charge each day.
- c) Full pay students will pay for meals at the District's published paid meal rate each day.

### **Charging Meals**

The charge meals offered to students will be the reimbursable meals available to all students. Meals may be charged within the following parameters:

- a) Students are allowed to charge the dollar equivalent of three reimbursable meals before parent notification procedures will begin. If a student comes to school and requests a meal after they have exhausted the balance on their account, the District will provide a reimbursable meal (charged to the account) so that the student does not go hungry that day;
- b) The only item permitted to be charged is a complete reimbursable meal. A la carte items such as snacks or ice cream may not be charged;
- c) Parents who do not want their child to charge a meal may notify the School Lunch Office in writing. A "no charging" alert will be placed in the point of sale system to alert the cashier.
- d) Nothing in this section is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt on school food service accounts.

### **Prohibition Against Adults Charging Meals**

Adults must pay for their meals at the time of service or set up pre-paid accounts.

## **Parent Notification**

Unpaid meal charges shall be addressed with the student's parent or guardian who is responsible for providing funds for meal purchases.

Every week, the Food Service staff will review account balances in the Point of Sale system to identify unpaid balances. Upon review, unpaid accounts totaling greater than \$10 will prompt the Food Service staff to send a letter or email to the parent or guardian. Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and accrued unpaid meal charges are due. A letter or email indicating the meals charged and the amount is sent home to the parent or guardian every week thereafter until payment is received.

If the District does not receive payment after communications are sent home, the School Lunch Director receives notification and shall attempt to resolve the situation with the family and if necessary, the assistance of the school principal. In appropriate circumstances the School Lunch Director may include a repayment schedule.

Unresolved debts to the school food service program may be turned over to District Administration or the school attorney for additional action.

The District's meal charge policy will be distributed to all households and applicable staff in writing at the start of each school year and to new households that transfer into the district during the school year.

As appropriate, District administration may contact Social Services to report a student's consistent failure to arrive at school with a meal.

## **Ongoing Staff Training**

Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the State Education Department (SED) Webinar or the District's training program. Staff will receive annual refresher training on the District's point of sale procedures, the District's Meal Charging and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming procedures, and the procedures for managing students and preventing meal shaming. Staff training will include ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

## **Parent Outreach**

Staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in the school enrollment packet.

In the event a student has charged five or more meals to their account,

- a. The School Lunch Office will attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals.
- b. The School Lunch Office will make two attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a free or reduced price meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- c. District staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of the application for free and reduced price meals to determine if there are other issues within

the household causing the student to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

### **Communications with Parents**

Information on the My School Bucks system to prepay meals is available at [http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments\\_and\\_programs/food\\_services/myschoolbucks/](http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments_and_programs/food_services/myschoolbucks/). Fund should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day.

Parents and guardians accessing the district wide payment system (MY School Bucks) have the ability to setup an email alert for unpaid balances.

The Food Service Director may confer with the building principal, social worker, guidance counselor, or other authorized staff for assistance in contacting the parent or guardian.

Parents and guardians with unpaid meal accounts shall be provided with information, assistance, and accessibility to free and reduced meal applications by Food Service staff. All parents and guardians shall be informed of eligibility of free and reduced meals at the start of the school year in accordance with procedures set forth by the New York State Education Department. Application information will be posted on the District's website at [http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments\\_and\\_programs/food\\_services/free\\_or\\_reduced\\_application\\_information/](http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments_and_programs/food_services/free_or_reduced_application_information/), included in the new registration packets, and be available through the principals, guidance offices, food service office and the registrar's office.

### **Minimizing Student Distress**

District staff will make all efforts to minimize student distress in the enforcement of the meal charge policy and the collection of debt for unpaid meal charges. The parent or guardian of students who have meal charges will be confidentially notified of their negative balance. Food service staff will exercise the following:

- a) Staff will not announce or publicize the name of any student with unpaid meal charges or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- b) Students with unpaid meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or other work to pay for meals.
- c) Students will not be required to throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous unpaid meal charges.
- d) Staff will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid meal charges.
- e) Staff will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid meal charges.

### **Procedures to enroll in the Free and Reduces Price Meals Program**

The District shall follow the procedures to enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program as set forth by the New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Unit.

Such procedures shall include, at the beginning of the school year, the District providing a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet and accessibility through the District website at <http://www.spencerportschools.org/>.

The Director of Food Service will review the applications and determine eligibility according to New York State Education Department guidelines, including direct certification and Department of Social Services certification for qualified individuals.

The Director of Food Service will notify parents and guardians by letter if their children qualify or do not qualify for free and reduced meals.

Each student enrolled in the free and reduced meal program in the previous year is automatically granted a thirty school day grace period at the start of the school year for the parent or guardian to submit a new application. The grace period will end after thirty school days or after a new application is processed and new eligibility determination is made.

### **Ongoing Eligibility Certification**

Staff will conduct direct certification through the New York Student Identification System (NYSSIS) or using SED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility.

If the District uses an electronic meal application, it will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.

The District will use its administrative prerogative to complete an application on a student's behalf judiciously, and only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the student's parent/guardian. The District will complete the application using only available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.

The District will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway coordinators to certify eligible students.

Before the annual thirty day grace period for free and reduced meals is exhausted, the Food Service Office will contact the parent or guardian by letter or email if a new applications for free and reduced meals has not been submitted.

The liaison will contact the Food Service Director to provide written notice that a student is designated as homeless. Foster, or migrant and qualifies for free meals on an immediate basis.

The Food Service Director will update the point of sale system to designate the student for free meals and maintain a listing for audit purposes.

### **Prepaid Accounts**

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via My School Bucks or with a check payable to Spencerport School Lunch Fund. Further details are available on the District's webpage at [http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments\\_and\\_programs/food\\_services/myschoolbucks/](http://www.spencerportschools.org/departments_and_programs/food_services/myschoolbucks/). Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.

To obtain a refund for a withdrawn or graduating student, a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in the student's account must be submitted to the School Lunch Office. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer any remaining money to a sibling's account through a written request. In the event that an account balance remains for more than \$10, Food Service Staff will make a notification in writing to the parent or guardian.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Spencerport School District Food Service Program.

### **Contact**

The Food Service Director, Gary Miner, may be contacted regarding the plan at phone number 585-349-5190 or by email at [GMiner@Spencerportschools.org](mailto:GMiner@Spencerportschools.org).