

MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with state and federal law, the *Belle Plaine 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

Students have use of a meal account. Families are able to add money to their respective lunch account via online payments, or by paying in cash or check at the school office.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Schools are encouraged to provide a reimbursable meal to students with outstanding meal charge debt. If an alternate meal is provided, the meal must be the same meal presented in the same manner to any student requesting an alternate meal

Students as well as employees may use a charge account for meals, but may charge no more than \$25.00 to this account. When an account reaches this limit, an employee shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with the student's parent or guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Parents or guardians will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the student owes five meals or more. Parents or guardians will be notified by *letters sent home by the foodservice department*. Negative balances of more than \$50.00 not paid prior to the end of the school year 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.

Unpaid Student Meals Account

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

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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.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent to develop an administrative regulations for implementing this policy.

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.

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

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