

## **SCHOOL LUNCH CHARGE POLICY**

Castleberry ISD recognizes the important link between proper nutrition and academic success. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent district procedure for charging meals when student do not have money to pay, preventing meal charges, and ensuring eligible children are certified for free and reduced-price school meals.

**School breakfasts are free to all CISD student. School lunch accounts can be funded through multiple methods:**

- Cash
- Credit card payments using myschoobucks.com

At the end of a school year, a student's positive balance will follow them to the next school year. Refunds of a positive balance for students leaving or graduating will be issued by making a request to the Cafeteria Manager of the Child Nutrition Office Secretary.

It is recommended that parents/guardians make meal payments in advance. If you are unable to pay for school meals due to your economic situation, please contact the Child Nutrition Office at 817-252-2040. Assistance may be available, and eligible recipients will receive the regular school lunch at a free or reduced cost.

### **Charging Meals:**

Hunger is an impediment to learning, no child shall be denied a school meal because of an inability to pay. Children will be served a meal that meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition standards for school meals. CISD will provide a 5-day grace period in which student are served a reimbursable meal, even if they do not have funds in their account to pay for the meal in hand. Note that charging of a la carte items is not allowed.

Overt identification of children with unpaid meal debt in the cafeteria is prohibited. Additionally, children with unpaid meal debt shall not be required to work off their debt, including, but no limited to, wiping down tables or cleaning the cafeteria. No meals can be charged during the last two weeks of school.

**Preventing meal charges:**

To ensure that all eligible families are certified for free and reduced-price meals, the Child Nutrition Office shall:

- Provide all households with school meal application prior to the start of the school year and/or include instructions for completing online school meal applications
- Provide school meal applications in the primary language of the parent or guardian and help with completing an application for any household that requests assistance.
- Promptly utilize data provided by the state or other school district officials to certify eligible children without an application; and
- assure that any child for which the school district is not able to obtain a completed school meal application but becomes aware of their eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals shall be certified based on an application submitted by the appropriate school official, as permitted by USDA guidance.

To ensure that households are aware of negative account balances and the potential to accrue meal debt, the Child Nutrition Office will:

- Direct the cashier to gently remind the student that their account is low.
- Send out low balance notices weekly prior to students needing to charge meals.
- Notify and work with principals, school counselors, and/or teachers to understand the student and parent's situation and if a school meal application is needed.
- Use email bi-weekly to notify parents of negative balances.
- Contact parent by phone when debt reaches \$20.00 to establish a payment plan and provide alternate meals until the payment plan is in effect.

**Collecting unpaid meal debt:**

Communications regarding unpaid meal debt shall be directed at parents or guardians. Schools may send children home with a letter regarding the unpaid meal debt, adults are not allowed to charge meals.

Prior to contacting household regarding unpaid meal debt, the school district will ensure that the student is not participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, or other federal programs, which would confer categorical eligibility for free school meals, or is not homeless, migrant, or in foster care, and would allow them to be certified without an application.

Any household with a negative school lunch account balance shall be contacted immediately by the Child Nutrition Office by email, phone, or letter home to provide information on how to add funds to the lunch account or how to apply for free or reduced-price school meals.

For household that cannot afford to pay their school meal charges, the school district will work with them to establish a payment plan. Household that are subsequently certified for free or reduced-price school meals at a point later in the school year shall not immediately be required to repay school meal debt accrued in that school year.