

## **534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the Minnesota Transitions Charter School's (MTCS) nutrition program and that MTCS 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 and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for a la carte items or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

### **II. PAYMENT OF MEALS**

- A. [ All a la carte items or second meal purchases are to be prepaid before meal service begins. A student who does not have sufficient funds may not be allowed to charge a la carte items or a second meal until additional money is deposited in the student's account.]
- B. A school that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage at or above the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate must participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision in order to participate in the free school meals program.
- C. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:
  - (1) participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and
  - (2) provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.
- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.
- F. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be

distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

### **III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION**

- A. MTCS will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches an amount set by the MTCS Board. Families will be notified by email.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing, or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing non-reimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.

### **IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES**

- A. MTCS will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. MTCS will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances of more than an amount to be determined by the MTCS Board and not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. MTCS may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. MTCS will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. MTCS will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

### **V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY**

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
  - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
  - 2. students and families who transfer into MTCS, at the time of enrollment; and
  - 3. all MTCS personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. MTCS will post the policy on MTCS's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.
- C. If MTCS contracts with a third party for its meal services, it will provide the vendor with its school meals policy. MTCS will ensure that any third-party provider with whom it enters into either an original or modified contract after July 1, 2021, adheres to the MTCS school meals policy.

**Legal References:** Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)  
42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)  
7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)  
7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A

**Cross References:** *None*