

STUDENT MEAL APPLICATIONS, PRICES AND CHARGES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of Policy is to support a nutritional environment for students by establishing guidelines for ensuring free and reduced-fee meal applications are completed and meal charges are separated from students' access to healthy meals.

II. BACKGROUND

- A. The Board of Education believes that students need adequate, nourishing food in order to grow, learn and maintain good health. Therefore, it is the district's intention to follow nutritional guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the NM Public Education Department.
- B. The District shall participate in the Food and Nutrition Services National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program which ensures the option of a meal charge policy. Such a policy will ensure school administrators, food service professionals, students and families have a shared understanding of expectations related to the charging of school meals.
- C. The Hunger-Free Students' Bill of Rights Act applies to a public school district, a public school, a private school or a religious school that participates in the national school lunch program or school breakfast program.

III. DEFINITIONS

- 1. *"Meal"* means a reimbursable breakfast or lunch that is provided daily to students by the RISD Department of Nutrition Services.
- 2. *"Meal application"* means an application for free or reduced-fee meals pursuant to the national school lunch program and school breakfast program.
- 3. *"SNAP"* means Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program, formerly known as food stamps.

IV. POSITION

- A. The district shall provide the option for all students to eat school meals. Information about menu choices, prices (full-price, reduced-price and free-price), and free or reduced-fee meal applications shall be easily accessible. With the exception of students who qualify for free meals, parents/guardians are responsible to pay for the school meals consumed by their child(ren).

- B. Children who bring their own meals to school shall have access to pay for beverages during the meal periods. A la carte options shall also be available for purchase at schools approved by the Department of Nutrition Services.
- C. Prices for all meals will be determined yearly by the RISD Department of Nutrition Services and shall be in compliance with USDA guidelines. Any changes in meal prices shall be promoted among school families and noticed on the district's website in advance of the price change.
- D. At the beginning of each school year, parents shall be informed of the availability of free- and reduced-price school meals. A printed or electronic meal application shall be provided with an explanation of the application process and instructions on how to request a printed application.
 - 1. If a school becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the school shall complete and file an application for the student under the authority granted by Title 7, Section 245.6(d) of the Code of Federal Regulations.
 - 2. Under USDA guidelines, students who have been identified through other government programs as low-income qualify for free meals through direct certification. Children who live in households that receive SNAP as well as children who are migrant, in foster care, homeless, or enrolled in Head Start are eligible.
- E. Although applications for reimbursable meals are traditionally submitted at the beginning of the school year, parents may submit applications at any time. Once a child's application is approved, parents do not have to fill out a new application for the same child in the same school year unless their family income is no longer eligible per USDA guidelines.
- F. Students who do not have money in their meal account, do not have cash to pay for their meal at the time of service, or owes for previous meals, may charge the school meal. The only exception is for a student whose parent/guardian has provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. Students shall not be expected to "work" for school meals and shall not be identified or stigmatized in any way for not being able to pay for a meal or for having a meal debt.
- G. If a student owes money for five or more meals, a school shall:
 - 1. check to determine if the student is categorically eligible for free meals;

2. make at least two attempts (not including the application process) to reach the student's parent/guardian and have them fill out a meal application. The notification shall be made with the parent and not the child;
 3. contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal and offer any other assistance that is appropriate.
- H. The Superintendent shall incorporate into the district's non-federal budget, provisions to pay-off student charges that are not collected from parents by the end of each school year. The district may use the services of a collection agency to recoup bad debt. Any fees incurred by services from a collection agency shall not be passed on to parents.
- I. The superintendent shall promulgate a regulation for the enforcement of this policy.

V. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Director of Food Services

Date

Legal Reference: *Healthy Hunger Free Act of 2010; Hunger-Free Students' Bill of Rights Act (SB 374, 2017)*