

Kelso School District #458
Nutrition Services Department
Meal Charging Policy

It is our goal as a public school district to feed our students nutritious and balanced meals to support classroom learning and quality of life. We recognize that on occasion, parents/guardians may forget to place money on their students' meal account. Due to the nature of our federally funded National School Lunch and Breakfast Program, we are required to implement a policy addressing the concerns of unpaid meal charges. Unpaid meal charges place a financial strain on the Nutrition Services Department and it is our goal to address this appropriately at all grade levels in order to continue our program. WA State law requires school districts to allow meal charging up to 30 days after the account has ran negative at *minimum*. This law prevents our district from turning away students due to insufficient meal accounts, and is the basis of the policy outlined below.

Division of Responsibility:

The Nutrition Services Department: Responsible for maintaining records of meal charges and alerting household of balances by way of phone calls, emails, and letters. Responsible for directly certifying students on a minimum of *monthly* basis in order to qualify as many students as possible.

The School District: Responsible for assisting the Nutrition Services Department in the collection of unpaid funds as well as intervention on an administrative level (principals and above) if deemed necessary.

The Parents/Guardians: Responsible for maintaining a positive meal account balance for students or delegating responsibility to adult students. Responsible for completing and submitting a Free/Reduced Meal Application on a yearly basis prior to the start of school to ensure benefits are granted before the student charges a meal.

At all Grade Levels:

1. Households will receive automated emails on a daily basis for negative account balances.
2. No students under the age of 15 will be involved in the conversation of their meal account balance unless they personally inquire.
3. The NS Office will attempt to communicate several emails, letters, and phone calls regarding meal account balances over a 30 day period and beyond. This includes attempting to directly certify the student for benefits.
4. After the last day of school, meal charges cannot be altered and will be permanent on the account.
5. **All Nutrition Services balance are expected to be paid by the end of the school year.**

High School Students (9-12th)

1. No students will be denied a meal or have a meal taken from them under any circumstances. Students will never receive an alternate meal based on meal account balance.
2. Students will be reminded by Nutrition Services staff of their balance when it reaches +10.00 until the account reaches zero.
3. Once the student's negative balance reaches 5 days' worth of meals, information will be passed to school principals and counselors to make personal contact with the family. Application assistance will be provided if necessary.

All Other Grade Levels (K-8th)

4. No students will be denied a meal or have a meal taken from them under any circumstances. Students will never receive an alternate meal based on meal account balance.
5. Students will not be involved in the conversation of the meal account balance regardless of delinquent status. Cashiers will not see balances on point of sale screens.
6. Once the student's negative balance reaches 5 days' worth of meals, information will be passed to school principals and counselors to make personal contact with the family. Application assistance will be provided if necessary.

A la Carte Sales:

1. A student may purchase an a la carte item(s) if:
 - a. They have a positive meal account balance which will cover the purchase.
 - b. They have cash and their meal account is in good standing.
2. A student may not purchase an a la carte item (s) if:
 - a. Their meal account balance is negative, or said a la carte purchase will bring the account negative.
 - b. They have an a la carte block on their meal account set forth by a parent or guardian.
3. A la carte purchases may not be reversed after they have been made. Communication regarding a la carte privileges should be made clear to students by parents or guardians prior to purchasing.

For Staff:

Meal charging is *not allowed*. All meals must be pre-paid. Substitute staff without skyward accounts must pay for their meal at the point of service in order to receive their meal.

Notification of Balances:

If a student has a negative balance we will attempt to notify their parent/guardian in the following manner:

- Email: Emails are sent out on a daily basis (M-F) to all guardians with a valid email address on file.
- USPS: A letter is mailed to the current address on file for the primary guardian; if the student is not currently receiving Free or Reduced price meals, an application for the current school year may be enclosed with the letter.
- Telephone: The school counselor or administrator will call the primary parent/guardian to determine if there are household issues preventing the student from having sufficient funds for school meals and offering appropriate assistance if needed.

Fines, Refunds, and Carry Overs:

Student meal account balances are carried from year to year dependent on the grade level and balance.

- Students leaving the district: Positive account balances will first go to siblings with negative balances/enrolled in the district. If there are no siblings in the district, any amounts over the cost of 2 full-priced lunches will be refunded back to the family automatically. Amounts less than the cost of 2 full-priced lunches will be donated unless otherwise requested by the family. Any negative balances for students leaving the district prior to graduation will be converted into a fine.
- Students remaining in the district: Both positive and negative balances will carry over from year to year for students in grades PK – 5th; students in grades 6th – 11th who end the school year with negative balance of \$5.00 or more will have their negative balance converted to a fine that must be paid through the ASB or school office. Negative balances for Senior's will be converted to fines on weekly basis beginning the week of May 15th until graduation.
 - **Please note:** Payments made to the KSD Nutrition Services Office or your student's cafeterias are NOT applied to fines.
 - Fines may affect the student's ability to receive their official transcripts or diploma upon graduation.
 - If the student's negative balance is not greater than -\$5.00, the negative balance will carry over on the meal account for the next school year (not converted to a fine).
- Failure to pay school fines and school meal balances may result in the school account being turned over to a collection agency for collection of unpaid fines and fees.
- Accounts that have been inactive for 5 or more years with positive balances will have all monies donated unless guardian requests a refund.

Payments may be made online through the Nutrition Services webpage link, in person at the Nutrition Services Office located at Kelso High School, or by sending your student to school with cash/check.