

# MAYNARD

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**School Committee Policy:**

**#529**

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### MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The provisions of this policy pertain to all school meals. The School Committee will provide a reimbursable meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.

#### **Meal Charges and Balances**

Students will pay for meals at the rate approved by the School Committee and for their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. Payment options will be delineated in student handbooks and provided to parents of incoming students. After the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items including but not limited to a second entrée, snack, ice cream, bottled water, or an additional milk/juice. The student will still be allowed to take a meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard meal rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact the food service liaison in the Business Office directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

#### **Free and Reduced Meal Eligibility**

Families may apply for free/reduced meals at any time during the school year, and as often as financial or household circumstances change. Families are required to complete an application yearly. Eligibility will roll over to the new school year only for first 30 operating days, at which time an application needs to have been processed to continue eligibility. Any lapse in eligibility resulting in a negative balance will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Eligibility is based off of the Federal Income Guidelines. Applications are available online and in each school office. Eligible students can receive one breakfast and one lunch every day. Additional meals and a la carte items can be purchased at full price. A free/reduced meal includes a meat/meat alternative, grain, fruit, vegetable, and a milk or juice.

Water is not included in a free/reduced meal according to the USDA guidelines, but is available for an additional charge.

### **Payments**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail at regular intervals during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parent/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact food service liaison for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents by setting up an online account (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the school's food service liaison. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents will receive automated low/negative-balance emails or mailed notices weekly, if applicable. If notices do not result in payment, parents will receive a phone call from food services liaison. If the phone call does not result in payment the food service liaison shall turn the account over to the Business Manager.

### **Refunds**

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request.

### **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

Failure to maintain up to date accounts may result in a delay of a student's extra-curricular school services, especially those that are fee based. Graduating seniors may lose the ability to participate in certain graduation related activities.

The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for parental assistance.

### **Policy Communications**

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating

in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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LEGAL REFS: MGL 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017

CROSS REFS: JQ, Student Fees, Fines & Charges

SOURCE: MASC February 2018

School Committee Approved: 03/28/19

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