

# Dowagiac Union Schools

## Administrative Policy 8500: Meal Charging Policy

The purpose of having a meal charging policy is to establish consistent clear meal account procedures throughout the district. There is a fine line between considering the fiscal integrity of the district and the solvency of the food service program while also meeting the nutritional needs of students.

### GOALS:

- To ensure that students have a healthy meal and that no child goes hungry.
- To treat all students with dignity and confidentiality in the serving line.
- To foster clear positive communication among staff, administrators, teachers, students and parent/guardian.
- To establish fair practices that can be used consistently throughout the district regarding meal charges and the collection of charges.
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of their child/student.

### SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

**The Food Service Department:** Responsible for maintaining meal account records, providing notes to teachers for parents/guardians regarding low balances-meal charges to be sent home with students and notifying school administration of potential problems and/or repeat offenders.

**The School:** Responsible for notifying the student's parent/guardian with phone calls and/or written documentation after credit limit has been reached. Administrators are responsible for working with households toward a reasonable resolution.

**The Parent/Guardian:** Responsible for immediate payment.

**MEAL CHARGING POLICY:**

*Although not required by law through the National School Lunch Act or the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, limited meal charging will be allowed, as a courtesy to families, under the following conditions:*

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:**

- Only reimbursable meals may be charged.
- Students may charge any combination of meals (breakfast and lunch) up to a value of \$12.00
- A letter/phone call will be sent home with the student after the first charged meal.
- A written notification will be sent home after the third occurrence with a Free/Reduced Meal Application.
- Upon the third charged meal, the School Office will place a call to the Parent/Guardian.
- Repayment within three school days is expected for all charged meals.
- All unpaid charges will be added to the list of any outstanding fees or unpaid fines at the end of the school year. Payment must be made in full to the Food Service Department or grades, report cards, and other privileges may be withheld.

**SECONDARY STUDENTS (6-12 GRADES):**

- Only reimbursable meals may be charged.
- Students may charge any combination of meals (breakfast and lunch) up to a value of \$12.00.
- Students will be notified verbally at the register when their balance is low, or when they are in arrears.
- Payment is expected for all charged meals and ala carte purchases.
- School administration/designee will be notified after the third occurrence for approval of meal, if charges greater than \$12.
- A written/phone notification will be sent home after the third occurrence with a Free/Reduced Meal Application.
- Repayment within three school days is expected for all charged meals.
- Students are not permitted to purchase Cookie Shop items if they owe any unpaid charges.
- All unpaid charges will be added to the list of any outstanding fees or unpaid fines at the end of the school year. Payment must be made in full to the Food Service Department or grades, report cards, and other privileges may be withheld.

We strongly discourage meal charges, but understand that an occasional emergency or forgetfulness may make it necessary. Meal charges are a temporary solution and are not intended to address broader issues of a parent/guardian's inability to pay for a meal for his/her child. In those instances, an Application for Free or Reduced Meal Benefits should be completed or contact with a building administrator.