

Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan

I. Purpose

The goal of the *Wayland-Cohocton Central School District* is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the *Wayland-Cohocton Central School District* in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. The *Wayland-Cohocton Central School District* provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Policy

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- Staff will be trained at the beginning of each school year regarding the district's Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan. The School Lunch Manager will access written documents as provided by Child Nutrition to distribute to staff. Any videos or other training materials offered by the Child Nutrition Unit will be viewed with staff.
- The School Lunch Manager will observe the checkout process randomly at least twice each year for each school building to ensure compliance with the district's plan.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within 2 days of the charge via email.
- If funds are not put on a student's account within 5 days, the School Lunch Manager will make a phone call to the parent/guardian.
- An invoice will be mailed to the home requesting payment within 15 days of the first overcharge.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- Free and Reduced Meal applications are included in the school calendar that is mailed to all homes in the school district during August.
- The Free and Reduced Meal application is available on the district's website.
- The School Lunch Manager will communicate with parents/guardians of students that have \$20 or more in charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals. The names of the students will also be checked with NYSSIS or using the NYSED Roster for direct certification.
- The School Lunch Manager will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet or in the school calendar.
- If no response is received from the parent/guardian, the School Lunch Manager will contact the building guidance counselor or social worker to reach out to the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students, such as being required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- Schools will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload monthly to maximize free eligibility.
- School staff will provide parents/guardians of new students with free and reduced price application and instructions in their school enrollment packet.
- Schools will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- Pupil Services will notify the School Lunch Manager of any new foster, homeless, migrant, runaway students entering the district so eligibility can be determined immediately.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via www.MySchoolBucks.com or with a check payable to *Wayland-Cohocton CSD School Lunch Fund*. Further details are available on our webpage at www.wccsk12.org. 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 may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the *Wayland-Cohocton Central School District Food Service Program*.