

MIDLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT MEAL CHARGE POLICY

I. Purpose

The goal of the Midland School District is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that each student whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student 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 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 *Midland School District* in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school lunch only. The *Midland School District* provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money.

II. Policy

FREE Breakfast - ALL Students at the Midland School District will receive a free breakfast each day.

Free Meal Benefit - Eligible students will be allowed to receive a free lunch of their choice each day.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch meal of their choice at no charge.

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. All Students in the State of Arkansas receive free breakfast each day, so students are only charged for lunches that are purchased.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

Parents/guardians will be notified of their student's meal account balance once monthly with payment reminder slips sent home from the school. Parents also have the option to sign up through our food/nutrition online system for account balance information. If a student balance reaches \$50.00, a phone call will be made to the parents/guardians to ensure that the parents/guardians have been notified about the outstanding balance. Once a phone call has been placed, letters will be mailed home to remind parents of the outstanding balance and a request for payments or to establish a payment plan.

PARENT OUTREACH:

School staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

School staff 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.

School staff will contact the parents/guardians to offer assistance with completion of the 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.

Payment reminders will be sent home monthly with students in plain, white envelopes to help ensure no overt identification of unpaid balances.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

School staff will conduct direct certification approximately four times each year to maximize free eligibility.

School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price applications and instructions at the beginning of each school year in a school enrollment packet.

Schools will provide 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.

Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway coordinators to certify eligible students. School liaisons required for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via ezschoolpay.com or with cash or check payable to *Midland School District*. 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 *Midland School District* Food Service Program.