

Cape Coral Charter School Authority

School District Meal Charge Policy 2024-25

I. Federal Requirement:

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for the Charter School that is participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy. Because not all students in the Charter School system may receive reimbursable school meals, all schools must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

II. PURPOSE OF POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department. The goals of this standard of practice are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, student, and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish a policy that is age appropriate
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges

III. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

- The food service department, Food Services Manager and School Accountant: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the student's parent/guardian.
- The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment

IV. ADMINISTRATION:

1. Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meal benefit. Any family that consistently falls into a negative balance will receive a written notification to encourage them to apply for free or reduced-price meal benefits. Balances can be transferred among family members.
2. Families are encouraged to pre-pay for meals through either myschoolbucks.com or may send money to be turned into the cafeteria for payments on the day of service. Written notification of prepayment options occurs at the beginning of each school year, is given to each new transfer student, and is posted on the Food Service website.

3. Families will be notified of the school Unpaid Meal Charge Policy in writing before the school year begins at our annual open houses and with each new transfer student. This policy will also be posted on the Food Service Website.

4. Elementary students: The policy is that a student may only charge two lunches and then they will receive the main meal item and a milk twice, after that if the unpaid balance remains the student will receive a sandwich and milk. **A la carte items will not be allowed to be charged at any time.** The funds need to be in the student's account to purchase the a la carte item that day. If a parent does not want their student to purchase any extra or a la carte items, a note may be put in the student's account and no extra items will be allowed to be purchased. Any money sent to the café will be put in the student's account and can be used any time throughout the year. The Charter School does not provide change to elementary students. Any student that is approved for free meals will not be denied a meal even if they have a negative balance on their account.

6. Middle School students: The policy is that a student may only charge two lunches and then they will receive the main meal item and milk twice, after that if the unpaid balance remains the student will receive a sandwich and milk. **A la carte items will not be allowed to be charged at any time.** The funds need to be in the student's account to purchase the a la carte item that day. If a parent does not want their student to purchase any extra or a la carte items, a note may be put in the student's account and no extra items will be allowed to be purchased. Any money sent to the café will be put on the student's account and can be used any time throughout the year. The Charter School does not provide change to middle school students. Any student that is approved for free meals will not be denied a meal even if they have a negative balance on their account.

7. High School students: The policy is that a student may only charge two lunches and then they will receive the main meal item and milk twice, after that if the unpaid balance remains the student will receive a sandwich and milk. **A la carte items will not be allowed to be charged at any time.** The funds need to be in the student's account to purchase the a la carte item that day. Any money sent to the café will be put on the student's account and can be used any time throughout the year. Any student that is approved for free meals will not be denied a meal even if they have a negative balance on their account.

8. Denying meals or providing alternate meals. It is always an awkward situation when a student does not have funds in their lunch accounts. The school provides **myschoolbucks.com** which will send parents a notice of a low balance amount once they set up an account. Parents can use the website to pay the day they need to make a payment. Cashiers on the lines will discretely remind students that they need to send in money for their account. When a student goes negative, the café leads are responsible for emailing or sending a past due letter to the parents. If the parent does not respond, then the café lead will make a phone call to the parent and leave a message if necessary.

9. Unpaid meal charges may not be carried over at the end of the school year (i.e., beyond June 30) as a delinquent debt. **To ensure all funds are collected, no one is allowed to charge any meals or a la carte items for the last month of school.** Written notice is sent out to all parents, posted at the cashier stations, and posted on the food service website. Any student, with no funds in the lunch account, will be allowed to have a sandwich and milk for that day.