

# Southern York County School District – Meal Charge Procedures

## I. Purpose:

Southern York County School District is dedicated to providing all students in attendance a high quality education including access to nutritious meals during the school year. The goal is to provide access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch at a reasonable cost. As a District, we have worked diligently to maintain low breakfast and lunch prices for all students and work to ensure all those eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program have access to the program. Unfortunately, there are families who may not qualify for free or reduced priced meals or others who feel they are unable to pay accumulated meal charges. As a result, the District is burdened with the cost of unpaid cafeteria balances. The purpose of these written procedures is to remain in compliance with USDA and PA Department of Education requirements and to provide accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances. In addition, the intent of these procedures is to ensure the District maintains a clear and consistent approach to our meal charge policy.

## II. Policy:

**All meal prices are approved by the School Board annually and are published in the monthly menu.**

### a. Ability to Charge – all grade levels

Per the Pennsylvania School Code, all students are permitted to charge reimbursable meals, even those students who do not have funds to pay for their meal. This purchase of a meal will be “charged” to the student’s lunch account and represents an obligation that is owed to the District by the parent or guardian of that child. A meal does not include any a la carte or snack items purchased by the student. Each cafeteria has sufficient amounts of water available for students so they may have something to drink with their meal each day at no additional cost.

If a student with a negative account balance attempts to purchase ala carte items, a non-reimbursable meal, or an additional meal, he/she will be politely informed by the food service employee that they do not have funds to purchase a snack (etc.) at this time. Food Service Employees may not provide account balance details to students unless the student asks what their balance is.

We understand that some parents or guardians may not wish for their child/children to be able to charge meals if no funds are available in their account. A parent or guardian may provide directions to the school to withhold meals if no funds are available, by writing a letter or e-mailing the business office and providing the following information; the student’s name, parent/guardian’s name, school your child is attending and POS ID (if available). In the letter or email, please state that you do not want your child to be able to charge any meal if no funds are available in their lunch account.

Please direct emails to Marie Hart ([marie.hart@sycsd.org](mailto:marie.hart@sycsd.org)) or letters to the district at:

Southern York County School District  
Business Office  
PO Box 128  
Glen Rock, PA 17327

**Students on the Free/Reduced Meal Program:** Students that qualify for free or reduced meals will be permitted to purchase all qualifying (reimbursable) meals for no charge or the reduced rate. However, if the student would like to purchase any ala carte items, extra milk, or a non-reimbursable meal, they must have available funds to do so.

### a. Funding of Cafeteria Accounts

All students, parents, and guardians have the ability to fund their point of sale (POS) cafeteria lunch account through payment of cash or check at the register in the cafeteria. Electronic payments are also accepted through MySchoolBucks. Additional information on how to remit electronic payment is available on the District's website under the "Parent/Public Portal". A letter is also mailed home to each family sharing how to obtain access.

**b. Balance Notifications**

On a weekly basis, parents and guardians are emailed a notification informing them if their child has a negative balance on their cafeteria lunch account. Those parents without an email address are mailed a letter every other week. This ensures all individuals are knowledgeable of their child's cafeteria debt. This notification complies with the notification requirement under Act 55, Section 1337 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

During the account set-up process and at any time during the school year, a parent/guardian has the ability to create a low-balance notification even if they do not use the system to make payments. This notification informs the parent if their student's balance dropped below a certain level. If a parent/guardian does not have internet access, they may call the school or the cafeteria to obtain their child's account balance.

**c. Collection of unpaid charges**

The following represents the process the District will follow when collecting cafeteria debt:

- As noted above, balance notifications for those with a negative balance will be sent out via email or mail every other week.
- At the end of each month, the Business Office will mail a letter to the parent/guardian of any student with a balance that exceeds \$25.00. This letter requests payment be made within ten (10) business days. We encourage all those with balances, who are unable to pay them, to set-up payment plans.
- For cafeteria accounts where a "\$25.00 letter" was already sent and the balance exceeds \$50.00, a certified letter will be sent by the District. This letter states the parent/guardian has fifteen (15) business days before the account is turned over to a collection agency.
- For those parents/guardians who have received a "Certified Letter" and have not responded by setting up a payment plan to reduce their child's cafeteria debt, paying off the balance due, or contacting the District to inform them of billing errors, the debt owed to the District will be turned over to a collection agency. Any further costs incurred to collect the debt will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.
- Once the debt is turned over to the collection agency, the agency will begin the collection process. All fees assessed by the agency are paid by the parent or guardian and not by the School District. For debts with the collection agency for twelve (12) months, in which \$100.00 or more is owed, and no payment has been collected by the collection agency, the District will authorize the collection agency to take legal action. This legal action includes the Collection Agency filing at either the local District Court, or the Court of Common Pleas with the Office of the Prothonotary.

Once the negative balance is turned over to the collection agency, the negative balance in the student's account will be removed, taking the balance to zero. The parent/guardian must work with the collection agency to satisfy this obligation.