

Palouse Prairie Charter School

NONINSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

8245

Unpaid School Meal Charges

The Charter School adopts the following policy to ensure Charter School employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, avoid identifying to other students or bystanders students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

Unpaid Meal Charges

When a student's school meal account funds are exhausted, a student paying the full or reduced price for meals may charge no more than \$40 to his or her school meal account. When a student lunch account reaches negative \$40, the child will no longer be able to order hot lunches. The child will receive a choice lunch.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases.

The Board directs the Director to draft a procedure detailing the manner in which notice of low account balances shall be given. The Charter School will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. The Charter School will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges. At least one written warning shall be provided to a student and his or her parent/guardian prior to denying meals for exceeding the Charter School's charge limit. Families will be notified by phone call and/or a letter sent home with the student and/or by email.

This notice may include a copy or description of this policy and information regarding how to apply for free or reduced price meals, including contact information for the federal programs director, who can help them with the application process. Active efforts to encourage eligible households to apply for free or reduced lunch may be used to prevent meal charges.

If payment of the negative balance is not received within 30 days of the maximum charge limit being attained, the debt will be turned over to the Director or the Director's designee for collection. Efforts to collect payment may include use of collection agencies, small claims court, or any other method permitted by law, provided the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs incurred to achieve those collections.

Students and parents/guardians of students are encouraged to prepay meal costs. Payments for school meals may be made by

1. Bringing payment to the school or Charter School office;
2. Mailing payment to the School;
3. Arranging Payment through your financial institutions bill pay system.

Notification

The Charter School will provide a copy of this policy to all households at the start of school each year and to families and students that transfer into the Charter School at the time of transfer. All Charter School staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy shall also receive a copy of this policy. It may also be communicated to school social workers, school nurses, the homeless liaison, or other staff members who may assist students in need. The Charter School may also make this policy available in student handbooks, on the Charter School website, or by other means deemed appropriate.

Records

Records of how and when this policy is communicated to households and staff will be retained.

The Charter School shall also retain documentation of the handling of bad debt. The Charter School may establish an unpaid meal charges fund to cover the cost of unpaid meal charges. Charitable groups, individuals, school fundraisers, and others may donate to this fund. Parents/guardians of children who pay the full amount for school meals and who have funds left over in their school meals account at the end of the school year may be offered the option of donating these funds to the unpaid meal charges fund.

If the Charter School chooses to establish an unpaid meal charges fund, the Director or his or her designee shall establish procedures for the use of such funds.

Other Reference: 2017 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools, United States Department of Agriculture
Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance Q&As, March 23, 2017, United States Department of Agriculture

Legal Reference: SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies, United States Department of Agriculture

Policy History:

Adopted on: 1/22/2018

Revised on: 12/17/2018