

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(a)

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy

The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious and healthy foods, through the District's food services program, that will enhance learning. The school nutrition program is an essential part of the education system and by providing good-tasting, nutritious meals in pleasant surroundings; we are helping to teach students the value of good nutrition.

Alternate language to consider: *Connecticut's school Child Nutrition Programs consist of the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, After School Snack and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs. It is a local decision as to in which programs the District selects to participate. These programs are federally funded and are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. At the State level, the school Child Nutrition Programs are administered by the Connecticut State Department of Education, which operates the program through agreements with the local school food authorities.*

The school nutrition program is an extension of the school's educational programs and it is the District's vision to have a partnership among students, staff, school family and the community in offering access to and providing nutritious meals, which are attractively presented at an affordable price.

The Board of Education (Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced price meals to eligible elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. Applicants for such meals are responsible to pay for meals until the application for the free or reduced price meals is completed and approved. All applications for free and reduced price lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

Although not required by law, because of the District's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal.

The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(b)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy (continued)

Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults (teachers, staff and visitors). Adults are not allowed to charge meals and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

Charging is not encouraged by the District but on those occasions that a student does not have money, they will be offered an alternate meal. ~~Examples of alternate meals include, but are not limited to, the following: (The District should decide which alternate choices will be offered and include the appropriate choices as part of this text.)~~

- ~~• A peanut butter and jelly sandwich and milk;~~
- ~~• A tuna salad sandwich and milk;~~
- ~~• A cheese sandwich, and milk or juice; or, and a fruit or vegetable.~~
- ~~• Cereal and milk.~~

The cost of providing this alternate meal cannot be incurred by the school food service account and the charge for this alternate meal will be **the regular meal price for that school.** \$_____.

In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, any charging of meals must be consistent with this policy and any accompanying regulations. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall develop regulations designed to effectively and respectfully address family responsibility for unpaid meals.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the ~~Food Services Manager/Director and/or the applicable school Principal~~ **Business Office** for assistance. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced price lunch to apply.

Definitions

"Alternate Meals" are not clearly defined in federal and state regulations. The use of alternate meals refers to any meal served to a student that is different from the day's advertised reimbursable meal. Alternate meals are most often provided to those students who have forgotten their meal payment(s) or medium of exchange.

"Delinquent Debt" are unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

"Bad Debt" are when unpaid meal charges are not collected and are considered a loss. Such debt must be

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

written off as an operating loss, which cannot be absorbed by the nonprofit school food service account, but must be restored using nonfederal funds.

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(c)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy (continued)

Elementary Students (~~Options to consider/choose~~) **District-Wide**

1. The District shall maintain a “no charging policy.” ~~The charge/no charge policy will be strictly enforced to eliminate unnecessary debt within the School Food Service Program.~~
2. ~~The District uses _____, an automated prepayment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balance and purchases, receive low balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their child’s school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge any combination of meals up to a negative balance of \$6.00. When the charge limit is reached, an alternate meal will be provided consisting of one or more of the alternate meal examples mentioned above until the charges are paid in full. This meal will not be charged to the student’s meal account. (A source of funding needs to be established based upon the fact that the cost of this meal cannot come out of the school food service account.) Negative balance status can be avoided by making a payment in the form of cash, check, or by credit card to the _____ website.~~
3. ***Parents are responsible for providing meals or meal money for their student(s). The District uses an automated prepayment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their child’s school meal account.*** Students shall be allowed up to ~~three (3)~~ **four (4)** reimbursable meal charges. *(District can consider a different number).* All other a-la-carte items shall not be charged. After ~~three~~ **four** charges, an alternative meal shall be provided. ~~The alternate meal shall consist of one or more of the examples listed above. When a charge is occurred, a written notification shall be sent home to parents.~~ ***The parents/guardians of a student with a negative balance on their account will be notified in writing and/or via email and/or via phone.*** All credited meals must be repaid.
4. ~~No elementary or middle school student shall be deprived a reimbursable meal due to forgotten or lost meal money. The school Principal will be responsible for maintaining a fund of money to loan to students without meal money. The pool of money may be established from school or PTA/PTO funds. The Principal or his/her designee is responsible for collecting money that has been loaned to students. Students will be responsible for repaying all loaned money within an established timeframe. A note shall be given to the student to take home or mailed to the student’s home to inform parents of the loan obligation. In situations in which a student is~~

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

~~consistently without meal money, the Principal or his/her designee should encourage the parent/guardian to apply for free or reduced price meals.~~

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(d)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy

Elementary Students (*Options to consider/choose*) (continued)

5. ~~The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary at the elementary level. The District/school policy is as follows:~~
 - a. ~~All charges must be paid in 10 days.~~
 - b. ~~Students may not charge more than 5 reimbursable meals.~~
 - c. ~~After the fifth meal, the school will provide an alternate meal consisting of one or more of the choices listed above.~~
 - d. ~~Parents will be notified and asked for prompt payment after 3 charges.~~
6. ~~Students shall be allowed to charge up to five meals. The student will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided. Parents of students who charge shall be notified by phone, after their child has received the meal. After charging four meals, the parents shall receive written notification that the child will then be given an alternate meal consisting of one or more of the choices listed above. If a pattern of charging continues, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application.~~

Secondary Students (*Options to consider/choose*)

1. ~~A student shall not be allowed to purchase any reimbursable meal on credit. An alternate meal will be provided, consisting of one or more of the alternate choices mentioned earlier. The cost of this meal cannot come out of the school food service account.~~
2. ~~The District uses _____, an automated prepayment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child's meal account balance and purchases, receive low balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their child's school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge any combination of meals up to a negative balance of \$6.00. No snacks or a la carte items may be charged. When the charge limit is reached, an alternate meal will be provided consisting of one or more choices listed above until the charges are paid in full. This alternate meal will not be charged to the student's account. (*A source of funding needs to be established based upon the fact that the cost of this meal cannot come out of the school food service account.*) If a student with a negative balance attempts to purchase a la carte items with cash, the money must first be applied to the negative balance.~~

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(e)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy (continued)

~~Secondary Students (Options to consider/choose) (continued)~~

3. ~~Students may charge up to _____ meals at the middle school level and 2 meals at the high school level. Once the charge limit has been met, a modified meal consisting of a cheese sandwich and beverage will be offered. (A source of funding needs to be established based upon the fact that the cost of this meal cannot come out of the school food service account.)~~
4. ~~Students shall be allowed to charge up to two meals. The student will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided. Parents of students who charge shall be notified by phone, after their child has received the meal. After charging four meals, the parents shall receive written notification that the child will then be given an alternate meal consisting of one or more of the alternate choices listed above. If a pattern of charging continues, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application.~~

~~District Wide (Options to consider/choose)~~

1. ~~Parents are responsible for providing meals or meal money for their student(s). Borrowing or charging is for one meal only in an emergency. Repayment is expected without delay. Snack and a la carte purchases are cash only.~~
2. ~~Although not required by law, because of the District's participation in the school Child Nutrition Programs, the Board of Education approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal. The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop rules which address:~~
 - a. ~~What can be charged;~~
 - b. ~~The limit on the number of charges per student;~~
 - c. ~~The system used for identifying and recording charged meals;~~
 - d. ~~The system used for collection of repayments; and~~
 - e. ~~Ongoing communication of the policy to parents/guardians and students.~~

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The school food authority is encouraged to consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs which would be incurred to achieve those

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

collections.

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(f)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Charging Policy

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt (continued)

Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered “delinquent debt,” as defined, as long as it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30, effective with the 2017-2018 school year.

After reasonable attempts are made to collect the delinquent debt, and it is determined that further collection efforts are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as “bad debt.” Such debt shall be written off as an operating loss not to be absorbed by the nonprofit school food service account but must be restored using non-federal funds.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school or school district during the school year.

This policy shall be included in student/parent handbooks, ~~on online portals that households use to access student accounts~~, placed on the District’s website, on the website of each school, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals and again to the household the first time the policy is applied to a specific child.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also should be informed of this policy.

The District’s school food authority shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.

(cf. 3542 – Food Service)

(cf. 3542.31 – Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

10-215a Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

P3542.43(g)

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

10-215b Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.
State Board of Education Regulations

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, “Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments,” Nov. 2, 2016

Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education “Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to No-paying Full and Reduced Price Students”

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No. 20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

USDA Guidance:

- SP 46-2016, “Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies”
- SP 47-2016, “Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment”
- SP 57-2016 “Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A”
- SP 58-2016 “2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation’s Schools”

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Policy Service

The Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations, and Bylaws

Policy adopted:

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.