I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district’s nutrition program and that school district 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 and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

A. Students are provided a meal account. This account will track students’ food purchases and charge the account for second meals, optional or additional milk, and ala carte purchases. All students will receive a regular meal at no charge. No student will be denied a regular meal, even if their account falls into a negative balance.

Students will not be allowed to purchase snack or a la carte items if the account has a negative balance. Families will be notified of account balances as outlined in Section III. Families may add money to students’ lunch accounts by online payment, cash or check payments can be made at the school with the nutritional services facilitator or in the office.

B. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students’ accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.

B. Families will be notified of a low account balance once the balance in the account reaches $10.00 or less. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches -$01. Families will be notified through an automated calling system twice weekly. Families also receive automated E-mail notifications if there is an E-mail address on file.
C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges.

B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.

C. Negative balances of more than $100 not paid prior to the end of the school year may be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent’s designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

E. The school district may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies or other commencement activities due to unpaid meal charges.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:

1. all households at or before the start of each school year;

2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and

3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.

B. The school district may post the policy on the school district’s website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4
42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq. (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
7 C.F.R. § 210 et seq. (School Lunch Program Regulations)
7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
BOARD POLICY 534
St. Cloud Area School District 742
St. Cloud, Minnesota

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