
Newport Public Schools **No. 5170** **Students – Administrative Policies – Food Service Program Meal Charge**

The Newport Public Schools and the Newport Schools' Food Service Company recognize that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn. The Newport Public Schools (NPS) shall provide nutritious and well-balanced meals in its school meal program. By statute, the district's Food Services department is a self-supporting fund that shall not have a negative balance at the close of a fiscal year. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Food Services department and on the district's operating budget. To be fair and equitable and in order to ensure compliance of all who participate in the school meal program, the policy establishes procedures for methods of payment, charge availability and collection methods.

A Newport Public Schools Meal Advocate staff person will work with families/ households applying for Free/Reduced status to facilitate completion of the federal application. Current year applications become available late July of each year and are valid for the entire school year. Applications are also available during registration, through the NPS Food Service, on the NPS website, and at all schools. The Meals Advocate is also available throughout the year to assess eligibility with families/households when there has been a change in family circumstances including job loss, reduced work hours, health problems or any situation in which the household income drops. Applications can be submitted at any time. The Meal Advocate also works with families/households to find a solution to settle delinquent accounts. NPS policy strongly states that the final application responsibility lies with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

The goals of this policy are:

- To establish a consistent district policy regarding the method of payment for meals, charge availability and collection process for charges in the meal program.
- To treat all students with dignity at all times
- To waive all cost for students who are eligible and approved for free school meals after completing the Rhode Island Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals or qualifying through other government programs . Only one application per household needs to be submitted regardless of the

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number of students living in the household. Families that receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Rhode Island Works Program will be notified in writing that their students are automatically eligible for free price meals and NO application needs to be submitted.

- Once eligible in a given year, you remain eligible for the entire school year.
- To reduce costs for students who are eligible and approved for reduced price meals after completing the Rhode Island Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals.
- To support positive interactions with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and district staff to the maximum extent possible.
- To encourage the parent(s)/guardian(s) to assume the responsibility of payments.

In order to provide parent(s)/guardian(s) in the NPS with the best possible service, clarity and accountability surrounding the Food Service Program, the following procedures regarding account balances are effective as of July 1, 2017 in accordance with the USDA and Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) guidelines:

1. The Newport Public Schools and the Food Service Company both encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to pre-pay for their student's meals. Pre-payments for meals can be made through use of an account on www.MySchoolBucks.com website, an online program for parent(s)/guardian(s) that works together with their student's school meal account. By accessing their student's account, parent(s)/guardian(s) can:
 - view their student's purchases and account balance at any time
 - setup balance notifications to be automatically sent by email
 - request email alerts to low balances
 - make payment or pre-payment on their account by credit card or e-check (an automatic deposit from a bank account) at a minimal fee.
 - setup automatic deposits to a student's account at a minimal fee.

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Cash and check payments will continue to be accepted at each school and cash for a daily meal will also be accepted at the register. Payments made through MySchoolBucks.com or by check are preferred.

2. Student accounts with a negative balance are not permitted to purchase a la carte items or charge them to their account.
3. A list of negative account balances of more than **five meals** will be forwarded to each school principal who will notify the School Meals Advocate. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of student's whose negative balance exceeds **five meals** will be notified in writing and have **five school days** to pay or make arrangements to pay the outstanding balances working with the School Meals Advocate and/or Principal. All correspondence and conversations regarding negative account balances will be handled discreetly.

KEY TERMS

A la carte Items: Any single component of a meal, a snack, bottled water, bottled juice or milk priced individually, not as part of a reimbursable meal. A la carte items do not qualify for free or reduced price and must be paid for at time of sale with cash or pre-paid funds on account.

Charge: Purchasing a reimbursable meal without making payment at time of purchase with cash or pre-paid funds on account.

Credit Limit: A negative account of Five Meals requires notification to the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Free Meal: A reimbursable meal served to a student certified as eligible for such benefits.

Good Standing: A school meals account with a zero or positive balance.

Policies

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Non-Reimbursable Meal: Non-reimbursable meals cost full price. Non-reimbursable meals are not part of the USDA program and do not qualify for free or reduced price and must be paid for at time of sale with cash or pre-paid funds on account. A meal not consisting of at least three (3) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat or meat alternative, fruit, vegetable and milk) or not including a fruit and/or vegetable component is considered a non-reimbursable meal.

Parent/Guardian Account: A free account on mySchoolBucks.com, an online program for parents/guardians that works in conjunction with their student's school meal account. By accessing their student's account, parents/guardians can view their student's purchases and account balance at any time, setup balance notifications to be automatically sent by email or make payment or pre-payment on their account by credit card or e-check (an automatic deposit from a bank account).

Payment: Cash or check paid daily for school meals or a la carte items or with pre-paid funds on account.

Pre-payment: Funds on account. Pre-payment is accepted in the form of cash or check at any register or through the district's online payment center, mySchoolBucks.com, using a credit card or e-check. Checks should be made payable to Newport Public Schools.

Reduced Price Meal: A reimbursable lunch priced at 40 cents or less, or a reimbursable breakfast priced at 30 cents or less, served to a student certified as eligible for such benefits.

Reimbursable Meal: To qualify as a reimbursable meal, the meal must include a fruit and/or vegetable component. A meal consisting of at least three (3) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat or meat alternative, fruit, vegetable and milk), at least one of which is a fruit or vegetable.

School Meal Account: An account assigned to every student in the district whether or not they participate in the school meals program. Students

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participating in the school meals program access their account using a unique, 6-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN) on PIN pads located at every register. School meal accounts maintain data required to be reported to federal and state agencies. Information pertaining to a student's eligibility status is securely contained within the account to assure confidentiality.

Second Meals: An additional meal consisting of one (1) or more components of the offered meal sold on an a la carte basis. Second meals are not part of the USDA program and do not qualify for free or reduced price and must be paid at full price at time of sale with cash or pre- paid funds on account.

*Parent(s)/guardian(s) may contact their student's school office, Principal, NPS Food Service Company or the NPS School Meals Advocate to address any issues or questions regarding this policy.

Reference

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Rhode Island Department of Education Guidelines

History: 6/13/17