534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

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 to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. It is the policy of ISD #2342 to offer breakfast and provide lunch at school. The food service strives to produce quality meals in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

B. The food service department utilizes Point of sale system requiring pre-payments. Students may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their personal accounts.

C. Families may apply for free/reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are provided to all families in the district prior to the school year. In addition applications are available at the district office and online at the District website: http://www.westcentralareaschools.net

III. PAYMENT OF MEALS

A. The Food Service Program is a pre-payment program. Families are expected to have a positive balance in the food service account at the beginning of the year and during the course of the school year.

B. *Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a student may charge no more than $50.00 or to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Notification of this action will be sent by letter to the family address on file.* Payments may be made on-line thru Payschools or in person at either of the three building sites.

C. If the school district receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.

D. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

E. Families who have been notified of negative balances and who have not made payment arrangements, at the discretion of the school district, the district MAY provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds (-$50.00 or more)? in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals.

F. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.

G. 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 by school messenger when meal account balances are low or fall below $10.00.

B. Families will be notified by letter of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches -$25.00 or more.

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. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.

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 $*50.00*, not paid prior to *the end of the semester*, *or families who have not made payment arrangements or paid in full* will 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.

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)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A