

MOUNT SINAI SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEAL PAYMENT AND CHARGE POLICY

The provisions of this policy pertain to regularly priced school breakfast, lunch meals only.

COST OF SCHOOL MEALS:

- Free Meal Benefit: Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch each day. A la carte purchases must be paid or prepaid.
- Reduced Meal Benefit: Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast and lunch at the established reduced meal rate. A la carte purchases must be paid or prepaid.
- Full Pay Students: Students will pay meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day.

WHERE MEALS ARE NOT PAID FOR AT THE POINT OF SALE, THE FOLLOWING RULES APPLY:

- All students upon the student's request, regardless of whether their parent or legal guardian has unpaid charges for school meals and regardless of their ability to pay at the register, shall be provided with a school meal of the student's choice from the available reimbursable meal choices for that school day.
- The District shall only be required to provide access to reimbursable meals, not a la carte items, adult meals, or other items.
- Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited. All such items must be paid or prepaid.
- The student's parent or guardian may provide written permission to the District to withhold a meal.
- There will be no adult charging (employees, volunteers, or visitors) of school meals.

TRAINING:

All staff responsible for serving student meals or collecting money for such meals will be trained to ensure that the District's procedures are carried out correctly. Such training shall include receipt and review of this plan at the time of the employee's hire, with retraining as needed. Training shall also include communication strategies to minimize stigma or embarrassment to students denied a la carte items.

MONEY OWED FOR UNPAID MEALS:

- A. Parents/guardians are responsible for meal payment to the food service program. Discreet notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year. Parents will be given notice of the negative balance on their student's account with weekly communications regarding the unpaid balance, which may include auto-calls or letters.
- B. The District will work with families, including developing a repayment schedule, where families are unable to pay the entire amount of any unpaid balance in a single payment.

- C. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child, if applicable.
- D. When a student owes money for five or more meals, the District shall:
- attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
 - make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
 - contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal, and offer any other assistance that is appropriate.
- E. The District will not publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means including, but not limited to:
- requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
 - require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;
 - require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals;
 - take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees. The District will attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector as defined in section eight hundred three of the Federal Consumer Credit Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. Sec. 1692a; or
 - discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.
- F. Nothing in this plan is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt.

PREPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS:

- Students/parent/guardians may pay for meals in advance via my school bucks or with a check payable to Mt. Sinai Schools. Further details are available on our website at www.mtsinai.k12.ny.us. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.
- Surplus balances will be rolled over for the student's benefit for the following school year.
- Regarding refunds for withdrawn and graduated students, a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Full-pay students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer any balance to a sibling's account with a written request. Reduced eligible students will have surplus money returned.
- Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Food Service Program.
- Collection of owed balances will follow the above procedures for unpaid meals.

ENROLLMENT IN THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCH:

- At the beginning of each school year, the District shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or provide in school enrollment packets an explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost;
- The District will provide assistance to families on request in completing an application for enrollment;
- Where the District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the District shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to Title 7, §245.6 (d) of the Code of Federal Regulations; and
- The District's School Liaison for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals in accordance with federal law.

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION:

The District will provide notice to all parents or guardians on an annual basis, prior to the opening day of school, outlining the requirements of this policy. This policy shall also be published in an appropriate school-based publication, and posted on the District's website.