

MEAL CHARGE PROCEDURE

Students and adults are expected to pay cash daily or pay in advance for all food purchases. It is the responsibility of the family to keep their lunch account up to date. Charging can be embarrassing to the students. We encourage the parents/guardians to maintain their child's account throughout the school year.

The Richmond County School System recognizes that on occasion, students may forget to bring meal money to school. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the Nutrition Services Department, the District will enforce the following policies by grade level:

A. Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Students

- I. **Free lunch** status allows a child to receive one free breakfast and lunch every day. À la carte items are not part of the USDA program and are not allowed to be charged.
- II. **Reduced-Price lunch** status students will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum of \$4.00. Reduced-priced lunch is .40¢. À la carte items are not part of the USDA program and are not allowed to be charged.

B. All Other Students

- I. **ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS (Grades PK-8):** A low balance or negative balance letter will be sent home with students on Fridays. For parents with email addresses on file, the letter will also be emailed. Students in grades PreK – 8 are only allowed to incur charges up to a maximum of \$30.00. Once a student reaches \$30.00 in charges, an alternative meal will be offered to the child and the cost of the alternative meal (\$1.00) will be charged to the child's account.

The nutrition manager and nutrition department will make every effort to contact parents in regard to delinquents account to confirm that the parent is aware that a payment is due. If payment is still not received, the Director of Nutrition Services in conjunction with the building administration will determine if further action is warranted. The Nutrition Manager and/or Principal will monitor the student at meal periods to make certain the student is receiving a breakfast/lunch provided by the parent/guardian.

II. **HIGH SCHOOLS (Grades 9-12):** High School students are expected to remain aware of their meal account balance and to bring deposits as necessary. Cashiers remind students daily when their account is low or overdrawn. A low balance and/or negative balance letter will be sent to parents with emails on file. The nutrition manager will make a courtesy call to parents of students with charges over \$12.00.

High School students will ONLY be allowed to charge a maximum of \$25.00. Students with any negative balance will not be allowed to purchase à la carte items, including milk. If a student still forgets to bring money when needed, he or she must deal with the situation BEFORE going to the cashier with a full tray of food and no money. Student meal accounts that have reached -\$25.00 will not be allowed to purchase meals unless they deposit money in their account or pay for the meal with cash.

C. Adults will not be allowed to charge any meals or à la carte items causing their meal account to go into a deficit balance.

The Nutrition Services Department is not required by state or federal law, or by Board policy to provide a meal at no charge to students. Parents are responsible for all meals charged to their child's account. No à la carte snacks, beverages, or second meals may be charged resulting in a negative balance.

After thirty (60) days of any negative balance, collection procedures will be initiated on all negative balance accounts. If there is no response to letters and after it is judged that the usual methods to collect the money owed the district have failed, then action will be taken to collect in small claims court or turned over to a professional collection agency.

Parents are encouraged to create an account on MySchoolBucks.com for online payments or to set up low balance reminders that can be sent to the parent by email.