

## **Meal Charge Policy**

### **Free/Reduced Meal Applications**

Guardians/Parents are strongly encouraged to complete the free/reduced meal application in a timely manner. The application can be found in the enrollment packet, picked up in the school office, and accessed online through the school website to print or to complete online after July 1<sup>st</sup>. Meal applications are accepted throughout the entire year. Free/Reduced Meal Benefits from the previous school year expire 30 days into the next school year. A new application needs to be filled out each year. For those who did not receive Free/Reduced meals the previous school year, the parent is responsible for meal charges until the free/reduced meal application is approved. Once an application is received you will receive an answer about benefits within 10 days.

### **Meals are Prepaid**

Parents are asked to pre-pay for student meals. It is requested that each student starts off the school year with a minimum of \$50 in their lunch account. Money may be added to the student lunch account using either check or cash turned into the school office in an envelope marked with each student's name and the amount that is to be deposited into each account. Credit card payments and automatic deposits for lunch are accepted in the office using Square. There is a small service fee for this option.

### **Meal Charges**

Students who do not have any money in their account to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service, will be permitted to charge a reimbursable meal. The meal will be the hot lunch for the day and will not be different due to not having money in the account. Students may charge up to \$40 per school year before they will no longer be permitted to charge meals. Students at the meal charge maximum must be provided a nutritious meal from home. If a student is at the maximum charge allowed and does not have a meal provided from home, he/she will be permitted to eat hot lunch one time only. The Cafeteria Manager will then inform the School Secretary who will schedule a meeting of explanation between the parent, Mr. Augustine, and the Cafeteria Manager. It is the discretion of Mr. Augustine whether the maximum charge amount will be waived or not.

### **Notification of Negative Balances**

Parents are encouraged to look on PowerSchool to check their student(s) account balance often. Parents may also call the school office or email [cafeteria@saintxrams.org](mailto:cafeteria@saintxrams.org) to inquire of their student balance. Attached to this policy are directions on how to access lunch balances on PowerSchool. This allows you to see balances and the charges your student accrues each day.

The Cafeteria Manager will provide parents with notification of a negative balance on a student meal account via email or text message once a week. In addition, the school will send home sealed negative balance letters with students at least two times per month if the negative balance continues after being reached to through email or text.

Mr. Augustine will be notified of a student's negative account balance once it exceeds \$15.00.

Services staff will not discuss negative balances with students.

### **Collection of Meal Charge Debt**

In collecting debt, the school shall ensure that collection efforts do not have a negative impact on the students involved and instead focus on the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases. The school will work with parents to establish repayment plans with payment levels and due dates appropriate to the household's particular circumstances.

For students with meal charges, the following process will be used to collect debt:

- Letter sent to parent by Cafeteria Manager.
- Phone call made to parent by School Principal.
- If the parent refuses to pay, their charges will become a delinquent debt.

### **Delinquent Debt**

As defined by the USDA, delinquent debt includes overdue balances with active, reasonable efforts being made to collect the outstanding amount due. Delinquent debts that have been determined to be uncollectible will be reclassified as "bad debt". "Bad debt" occurs when collection efforts have been unsuccessful as of the last day of May or the last day a student attends their current school. "Bad debts" must be paid annually at the end of the fiscal year (June 30) using the school discretionary budget.

### **Unused Credit Balances**

Parents of students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation may request a refund of the credit. Parents may also request a transfer of existing balances to the account of a sibling by contacting the school. Credits remaining after twelve (12) months of disenrollment will become the property of the cafeteria and be transferred into the donation account.

### **Annual Notice**

The district shall notify parents about this policy at the beginning of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to those students who transfer into the district during the school year. Information about this policy will also be posted on the district website.

This policy will also be communicated to school and district-level staff responsible for this policy's enforcement, such as school food service staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved in notifying families' negative balances, and staff involved in enforcing any other aspects of this policy.