

2020-21 School Year

At A Glance LSSD Meal Charging Procedures

For more information visit: <https://www.lkstevens.wednet.edu/Page/5126>

For all school grade levels:

Student accounts and parent notifications

- The goal is for student accounts to remain positive and all households are accountable for meal charges and all balances, positive or negative, carry over to the next school year
- Parents will be notified automatically of unpaid meal charges through automated phone and emails messages

Charging limit and offered meal

- The district does not want to burden any family with unpaid accumulating debt; therefore, any student with insufficient funds will be allowed to charge up to 2 meals and then will be offered a courtesy meal at no charge
- Students accepting a courtesy meal will be able to self-select from a variety of fresh fruits, veggies, milk and juice in addition to any of the cold combinations offered
- Food Services will not delay or deny a meal due to a student having insufficient funds, *unless Food Services has received and processed a parent/guardian online request that no school meal charging be allowed. This request also has the option opt out his/her student(s) from being offered a courtesy meal by food services.*
 - [Parent/Guardian Request Form to opt out of Meal Charging and Courtesy Meal Offering](#)
- A la Carte and non-student purchases cannot be charged

Meal account payment options

- Online payment electronically through www.mymealtime.com or through the free app “My MealTime” is encouraged
- We also accept check or cash payment at any school office or sent with the student

Financial support

- Food Services will distribute and make available free and reduced applications to households and proactively qualify a student for free or reduced price meals through state systems made available to district
- Applications are available in any school office or online and are accepted all year long as financial situations may change

Our Intent

Our department relies on payments, in addition to federal reimbursements, in order to protect the financial stability of the district's food services program. The following procedures establish a consistent process, as well as a shared understanding for charging meals and minimizing the identification when students do not have money. It is the expectation that families will do their best to keep accounts in good standing and be accountable for meal charges accrued by their child.

Charging Meals

Any student who requests a meal will be offered a complete meal from the daily menu that meets the USDA's nutrition standards for school meals

- All students are allowed to charge up to 2 meals
- A la carte charges will not be allowed for any grade
- Adult and non-student meals cannot be charged
- Children who have money to pay for their meal at the time of service must be provided a meal and the money may not be used to repay previously unpaid charges if the child intended to use the money to cover the purchase of that day's meal

Reimbursable Meal Offered to All Students

We are committed to ensuring all Lake Stevens students continue to have access to meals and quality nutrition they need to grow, learn and thrive. The National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. With respect to finances, we want the meal service to remain a positive experience for all students and will serve every child a well-balanced meal, without delay, if they enter the line and request one. Because hunger is an impediment to learning, no child will be disallowed or denied a school meal.

The district does not want to burden any family with unpaid accumulating debt. Therefore, it is the practice for all students to be offered a complete breakfast or lunch when their account reaches the 2 meal charge limit. The courtesy meal will be offered at no charge. Students are able to self-select fresh fruits, veggies, milk, and juice, in addition to any of the courtesy meal cold combinations offered of their choice. These meals minimize any identification or singling out of a student, are available daily at all service lines, and are often selected regularly by paying customers.

Protecting Student Confidentiality

Food Services strives to serve each student with dignity and respect. Hand stamps, stickers or any other means of overt identification of a student with unpaid meal debt in the cafeteria or the classroom are prohibited. Additionally, students with unpaid meal debt shall not be required to work off their debt, including, but not limited to, wiping down tables or cleaning the cafeteria.

Direct Communication with Households

All communication regarding unpaid meal balances will be directed to parents or guardians. If a student asks about his or her meal account balance, Food Services staff will communicate with the student discreetly.

To support families in maintaining positive balances the Food Services program will:

- **Provide accessible school meal deposit and payment options by:**
 - Accepting payment (check or cash) at the school, sent with the student, or electronically through the web at www.mymealtime.com or through the downloaded free app “My MealTime”
- **Notify parents directly of low and unpaid account balances directly using the districts communication systems through:**
 - Automated Unpaid Meal Balance Email Notifications on Tuesday and Thursday evenings
 - Automated Unpaid Account Balance Phone Calls on Sunday and Wednesday evenings
 - Parent elected personalized low balance notifications through the My MealTime online payment system
 - Unmarked envelopes with account balances mailed home or sent through the school office
- **Ensure that all eligible families are certified for free and reduced-price school meals by:**
 - Distributing school meal applications prior to the start of the school year or at the time of enrollment, as well as printed and available in each school office or online throughout the school year. Parents with questions or who need assistance may contact Food Services at (425) 335-1561
 - Regularly (weekly) utilizing data provided by the state or other school district officials to certify eligible children without an application
 - Completing a school meal application by a building designee, for any child known to be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals if the household fails to apply

Account Balance Refunds and Unclaimed Funds

Account balances for a student will be carried over to the next school year. If a student is graduating or withdrawing with a positive account balance, a refund request form may be submitted. Unclaimed funds are turned over to the Washington State Department of Revenue.

Donated Funds

The Nutrition Office will equitably manage funds donated to offset unpaid student meal debts. The donated funds will be distributed throughout the district accounts according to district processes. The district welcomes families to donate excess funds left in their child's Food Services account, except in the case of households approved for reduced-priced meal benefits whose accounts must be refunded per federal requirements.

Repaying an NSF Check (Non-sufficient funds at bank)

We only accept cash to repay any NSF check returned by the bank. Until it has been paid we can no longer accept checks from the household. If the district receives three NSF checks from the same household during the school year, our district guidelines state that no further checks will be accepted in district for that current year.

Collecting Unpaid Meal Debt

The Food Services program will monitor unpaid account balances and work with family engagement specialists to understand the child and parent's situation and work with families on a case-by-case basis. The district will make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent (overdue) unpaid meal charges and will coordinate communications with families to resolve the charges. Meal account balances for a student will be carried over to next school year.

The school district will review and determine uncollectible accounts ("bad debt") from the previous school year using donations and/or other non-federal funds (e.g. general fund). An account is deemed uncollectible if the child has incurred charges and is certified for free or reduced-priced meals and/or all attempts to collect have been unsuccessful and/or the child is no longer a student in the district.