

# SCHOOL MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The Quabbin Regional School District School Committee recognizes that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn.

In addition, Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 210.10(a)(1) General Nutrition Requirements states “Schools must provide nutritious and well-balanced meals to all the children they serve.” In accordance with this regulation, the Quabbin Regional School District will not deny any student access to school lunch.

However, by statute, the district’s Food and Nutritional Services department is a self-supporting fund that shall not have a negative balance at the close of a fiscal year.

Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Food and Nutritional Services department and on the district’s operating budget.

To be fair and equitable and in order to ensure compliance of all who participate in the school meal program, the policy establishes procedures for methods of payment, charge availability and collection methods.

The Quabbin Regional School Committee establishes the following goals:

- To establish a consistent district policy regarding the method of payment for meals, charge availability and collection methods for charges in the district’s meal program.
- To treat all students with dignity at all times.
- To waive all cost for students who qualify for free school meals after completing the Massachusetts Free and Reduced Price School Meals Household Application or qualifying through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Health and Human Services, Virtual Gateway.
- To reduce cost for students who qualify for reduced priced meals after completing the Massachusetts Free and Reduced Price School Meals Household Application.
- To support positive interactions with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and district staff to the maximum extent possible.
- To encourage the parent(s)/guardian(s) to assume the responsibility of payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.

## METHOD OF PAYMENT

The Quabbin Regional School District will accept pre-payment of school meals in the form of cash or check at the register or via the school meal online payment center- mySchoolBucks.com. Cash for a daily meal will also be accepted at the register.

## STUDENT ACCOUNTS

Any student whose school meal account has a zero or negative balance **will be allowed to charge a reimbursable meal**. A “reimbursable meal” is defined as a meal consisting of at least three (3) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat or meat alternative, fruit, vegetable and milk) and must include a fruit and/or vegetable component. This will result in a negative balance on the student’s account until funds are added to the student’s account.

Under no circumstances will a student with a negative account balance be allowed to purchase a la carte items until the student’s account is in good standing. “Good standing” for the purchase of a la carte items is defined as an account with a positive balance.

### **For Students with Free Lunch Status**

- The federal school lunch program allows a qualifying student to receive a free school lunch every day.
- Students are required to take a reimbursable meal.
- Items sold on an a la carte basis are not part of the USDA program and must be paid for with cash. A la carte items cannot be charged.

### **For Students with Reduced Price Lunch Status**

- The federal school lunch program allows a qualifying student to receive a reimbursable meal at the reduced price of \$0.40.
- Students are required to take a reimbursable meal.
- Items sold on an a la carte basis are not part of the USDA program and must be paid for with cash. A la carte items cannot be charged.
- Students with reduced price lunch status will be allowed to charge reimbursable meals up to \$4.00 before the collection process begins.

### **For Students with Paid Lunch Status**

- Prices for school lunch are set by the Quabbin Regional School District School Committee in accordance to federal and state regulations.
- A la carte items cannot be charged but may be purchased with cash.
- Students with paid lunch status may charge reimbursable meals up to \$15.00 before the collection process begins.

### ***The Collection Process***

***Step 1:*** When the charge amount exceeds the amounts set above, the Food and Nutritional Services Manager or designee will send a letter or e-mail to the parent(s)/guardian(s) requesting immediate payment.

***Step 2:*** If the parent(s)/guardian(s) has not made any payments in an effort to reduce the negative balance or fails to bring the student's account in good standing within thirty (30) days, the administration may:

- Refer the account to a collection agency.
- Initiate a claim in the court system.
- Notify other appropriate state agencies.

***Step 3:*** If a student's account balance exceeds -\$50.00, the administration may prohibit participation by the student in any future fee-based program (field trips, user-fee based programs, etc.) until or unless the deficit balance is paid in full.

#### **Additional Steps:**

***If a student's account is not in good standing at the end of the school year, the administration may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law or regulation:***

- Delay the issuance of report cards, transfer cards, and class assignments until or unless the negative or delinquent balance is paid in full.
- Prohibit the student's participation or other students in the student's household from participating in any future fee or charge-based program until or unless the negative or delinquent balance is paid in full.
- Refer the account to a collection agency.
- Initiate a claim in the court system and/or contact the MA District Attorney's office.
- Notify other appropriate state agencies.

***If a senior's account is not in good standing as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, the administration may prohibit the student from participation in senior activities and/or graduation exercises.***



*An excerpt of*

## **School Meal Charges Policy**

*To view the full School Committee Policy EFA, visit the district's website at <http://www.qrsd.org/school-meal-charges-policy/>*

*OR call the Superintendent's Office to request a paper copy.*

**Quabbin Regional  
School District  
872 South Street  
Barre, MA 01005  
978-355-4668**