

## **SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM CHARGE POLICY**

The East Longmeadow School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs. and minimizing any impact on students with charges for a la carte purchases.

The District provides free meals to all students (one free meal per meal service – free breakfast will be implemented at all five schools in September 2024). However, unpaid charges for additional meals, or a la carte items place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student balances.

### **Charges and Balances**

Each student will be allowed to take one regular meal per meal service period (breakfast will be implemented in all five schools beginning in September 2024). Students may want to receive additional meals, or to purchase a la carte items. Students will pay for additional meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee. Student Accounts will be maintained by the District Food and Nutrition Program as prescribed by the District.

The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal or ala carte charges incurred beyond the free meals provided. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

### **Payments**

Payments for additional food purchases beyond the regular meal will be made to the District Food and Nutrition Program. Parents will be notified of account balances or deficits at regular intervals as prescribed by the District. If parents/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact the Food Service Office (413-525-5450 extension 7980) for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay in advance for anticipated purchases beyond the free meal allowed during each meal service period. Further details are available on the school district webpage. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without a positive balance in their account on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents/guardians by setting up an online account at <https://payschoolscentral.com/> or by speaking with the school's food service office. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's account status. Parents/guardians will receive automated low-balance notices. If notices do not result in payment, the food service department shall turn the account over to the business office.

## **Refunds**

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students' funds will transfer to a sibling's account or can be donated to a student in need with a written request.

## **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

Contact the School Food Service Office at 413-525-5450 extension 7980 for family assistance.

## **Policy Communications**

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

LEGAL REFS: MGL [71:72](#); USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017,

Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023

CROSS REFS: [JQ](#), Student Fees, Fines & Charges

[EFE](#), Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs

SOURCE: MASC - Updated 2023