

# **Bakersfield City School District**

## **Meal Charge Policy**

### **I. PURPOSE/POLICY:**

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to insure their child has sufficient funds on their account to cover all school meals and to keep abreast of their child's account.

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Nutrition Services Department and District. The goals of this policy are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts. All students will receive the same meal regardless of account balance status.
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.

### **II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:**

**The Nutrition Services Department:** Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the parents/guardians with written documentation of outstanding balances. Approximately three weeks prior to school starting, all enrolled families will be mailed a free/reduced application. During the first two weeks in September and the final week of September, any student without an application will be provided with another application and the family will be notified via automated phone message that the student does not have an application on file. Efforts will continue throughout the school year to obtain applications from students who exhibit financial hardships.

**School Principals:** Responsible for working with School Nutrition Managers to obtain free/reduced applications for students exhibiting financial hardships.

**The School District:** Responsible for supporting Nutrition Services Department in collection of debt and reconciliation of accounts.

**The Parent/Guardian:** Responsible for immediate payment.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION:**

Students and their parents/guardians shall be notified whenever their account has a low or negative balance. Whenever a student's account has an unpaid balance of \$50 or

more, parents/guardians shall be notified in writing that full payment is due upon receipt of notice. Students with negative balances will be contacted by the Nutrition Services Department. This will be done via a weekly automated phone message and then in a written letter, or electronic e-mail if provided by family.

For departmental record-keeping, the District should be notified monthly of all negative balances.

Graduating eighth graders must pay all charges in full prior to May.

No adults can charge any meals or beverages.

No charges are allowed for student ala carte items such as milk, juice, water

In cases of repeated nonpayment by a student, the Superintendent or designee may contact parents/guardians to discuss the reasons for the nonpayment. The Superintendent or designee may evaluate individual circumstances to determine if the student's parents/guardians need assistance completing an application for free or reduced-price meals or need referral to social services.

The Superintendent or designee may enter into a repayment plan with a student's parents/guardians for payment of the student's unpaid meal charge balance over a period of time.

The District's efforts to collect debt shall be consistent with district policies and procedures, California Department of Education (CDE) guidance, and 2 CFR 200.426. The district shall not spend more than the actual debt owed in efforts to recover unpaid meal charges.

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain records of the efforts made to collect unpaid meal charges and, if applicable, financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal balance has become an operating loss.