

## **4.51—Food Service Pre-Payment and Charges**

### **Free and Reduced Meals**

Free and reduced meals are available to those who qualify. Applications are provided at the beginning of the school year and always available at each school office during the school year. Applications are also accessible at the district website: <http://tigers.wsc.k12.ar.us/>. Applications may be submitted any time during the school year. For application assistance or questions, please call 479-965-7160.

### **Pre-Payments**

Parents/guardians are highly encouraged to make pre-payments by check, but cash will be accepted. Further written instruction for sending checks or cash is provided in the Back-to-School packet at the beginning of each school year or during enrollment through out the school year.

### **Account Balance**

If an account has a negative balance, the district sends payment reminders home one time per week. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that there are adequate funds to cover their child's meal(s) each day.

### **Meal Charges and Reasonable Collection Efforts**

Charges shall be carried over from school year to school year. The district is required to follow all applicable regulations and laws regarding delinquent debt. As required, the district must make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent debt. The district shall consider (2) two attempts to contact the parent/guardian and the district's willingness to establish a payment plan that would reduce delinquent debt substantially to be "reasonable efforts to collect delinquent debt" as required.

### **Grades K-4 Negative Balance and Collection of Delinquent Debt**

When a paid or reduced student's account is a negative **\$100**, the account shall be considered "delinquent," and the student's principal will make **(2) two** attempts to reach the parent/guardian by available methods of communication. If the parent cannot be reached, **or if a practical payment plan cannot be agreed upon, the student shall then be given an alternative free lunch until the balance is paid below \$25.**

### **Grades 5-12 Negative Balance and Collection of Delinquent Debt**

When a paid or reduced student's account is a negative **\$50**, the account shall be considered "delinquent," and the student's principal will make **(2) two** attempts to reach the parent/guardian by available methods of communication. If the parent cannot be reached, **or if a practical**

**payment plan cannot be agreed upon, the student shall then be given an alternative free lunch until the balance is paid below \$10.**

### **Reclassification of Delinquent Debt**

When collection efforts have failed, the superintendent may determine that further collection efforts are useless or too costly and reclassify “delinquent” debt as “bad” debt. **Bad debt by its definition is uncollectible and shall be written off as operating losses and must be restored using non-federal funds.** When writing off bad debt, the superintendent shall direct applicable personnel to write off the bad debt and establish an audit trail to show the district paid the bad debt with non-federal funds. Specific examples of bad debt may include, but are not limited to, the student moving away, dropping out of school, graduating, or multiple failed collection efforts.

### **Loss of a Student’s Privilege to Charge Due to Bad Debt**

The district is NOT required to allow meal charges and considers charging a privilege for students with accounts in good standing (not delinquent as explained above). The district allows students to charge with the intent of providing students with proper nutrition to focus and minimize stigmatism regarding insufficient funds; however, the district is required to maintain the financial integrity of the food service program.

If the superintendent reclassifies a student’s account from “delinquent” debt to “bad” debt at any time, the student may lose his/her privilege to charge meals indefinitely with pre-payment required. **If a student loses his/her charge privilege, the student shall be given an alternative free lunch until sufficient funds are available in his/her account.**

A copy of this policy must be communicated in writing at least once to all households at the start of each school year and to households of students who transfer to the school during the school year. Communication methods include a copy of the policy in:

- Student enrollment materials
- Student handbooks

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not consider providing a copy of this policy only in electronic format to satisfy the communication requirement.

A written copy of this policy must be provided to all staff responsible for policy enforcement.

This includes:

- A. School food service professionals;
- B. Staff involved in notifying families of low prepaid account balances;
- C. School social workers;
- D. School nurses; and
- E. The LEA homeless student liaison.

Cross Reference—Policy 7.17

Date Adopted: June 26, 2017



