

Adopted:

Revised: April 20th 2022

**NORTH METRO FLEX ACADEMY
POLICY 5.4.7
SCHOOL MEALS**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students at North Metro Flex Academy (school) receive healthy, nutritious meals through the school's nutrition program and that school employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. This policy provides guidance on how students can receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day regardless of their account balance. Identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals will be minimized while maintaining the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. If the school receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- B. Households may apply for free/reduced-price meals anytime during the school year.
- C. Funds can be deposited into the student's lunch account by sending a check or cash to the school's front office. Meals may be prepaid.
- D. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed among the accounts. Funds will not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.
- E. A student with a negative account balance will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.
- F. The school will provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements of a sandwich, fruit, and milk to a student who does not have sufficient funds in their account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals.

III. NOTIFICATION OF NOMINAL OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES

- A. The school will make every reasonable effort to notify families when meal account balances are \$5.00 or below. Families will be notified by methods that may include, but not limited to, email, personal call, or notice sent home.
- B. Payment reminders will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school meal program.
- C. See Attachment A for detailed information.

IV. COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school will make every reasonable effort to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free/reduced-price meals for their children.
 - B. The school will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances of more than \$50 may be turned over to the principal for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and pertinent supporting information shall be provided to families at the start of the school year. During open house it will be required to provide acknowledgement of receipt of this information on the provided document.
- B. The school will post the policy on the school website in addition to providing the required written notification described above.
- C. School menus will no longer be sent home. They will be posted on the school website under the Resource Tab in the Health and Nutrition Section.

ATTACHMENT A

NEGATIVE LUNCH ACCOUNT BALANCES AND REMINDERS

Families are strongly encouraged to continually monitor their child's meal account balance. Providing your email at registration will help us communicate important information regarding promotions and meal account alerts.

The school realizes that children sometimes forget to take their lunch money to school or sometimes even misplace it. Many families have such a hectic schedule that it's easy to forget to check their child's account weekly. Although families have the option to pay for their child's meals in advance, there are still those times when a child's account may run low. Therefore, there is a plan to help ensure that your child always has a meal during the day. If your household is experiencing a temporary or long-term financial need we may also be able to provide assistance in developing a payment plan.

Students of all grades are allowed to charge up to \$20.00 for complete meals according to the grace period set by the school board. A complete meal is at least three of the offered meal components which consists of a meat, fruit/vegetable, grain and milk, with at least one component being a fruit or vegetable. The school will work with the family to develop a repayment schedule for any outstanding account balance and provide an application for free/reduced-price meals. If the school is unable to work out an agreement with the student's family on replenishment of the meal account and payment of any outstanding balance, the student will receive an alternate meal of a sandwich, fruit, and a milk.

All negative balances must be reconciled immediately. If your child's meal account balance requires special consideration on any day, please contact the school as soon as possible to set up payment arrangements. An exception to the above charge policy may be authorized, allowing your child to receive a regular meal for the day

Every effort will be made to communicate with families when a child's meal account falls below \$5.00 and upon request, will set up payment arrangements or provide an extension of the charge maximum in order to continue serving your child a complete meal.

At least once per week the Cafeteria Manager will provide "Negative Balance" notices to students whose accounts are \$5.00 or below. Please check your child's book bag daily.

Negative balances incurred before an eligibility change to "free or reduced-price" status still must be paid since the charges occurred prior to the change. Please contact the school for payment arrangements if needed.

All returning families must complete and return a new Free and Reduced-Price Meal application within the first 30 school days of the new school year in order to be processed timely. Any families that do not have an updated meal application processed or have had a categorical eligibility update by the end of the first 20 school days of the new school year will automatically convert to "Full Pay" status until a new application is received and processed. Any resulting meal charges must still be reconciled on the account.

Negative or positive account balances carry from the end of one school year to the beginning of the new school year.

We ask for your support as we strive for excellence in our Child Nutrition Department. Our priority is always to serve your children delicious, healthy, and well-balanced meals in an inviting atmosphere. Based on special circumstances, the Cafeteria Manager reserves the authority to make exceptions that are in the child's best interest but not in violation of a student's Civil Rights.

**BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PRICES
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL YEAR 2019/2020**

Breakfast - \$2.10

Lunch - \$3.20

Milk (when not provided with meal) - \$.40