

The Board of Education operates and maintains a point of sale system for the purpose of providing parents/guardians of students enrolled in the School District with the ability to fund school meals. The School District's point of sale system allows for automatic replenishment when a balance reaches a certain amounts set by the parent/ guardian of the student. The School District will encourage parents/ guardians of students in the School District to avail themselves of this option. Funds remaining in a student's school meal account at the end of a school year will be carried over to the next school year. When a student ceases attendance in the School District and/or graduates from the School District, the School District refunds any funds remaining in the student's account to the parent/guardian. Parents/ guardians may request that said remaining funds be transferred to one of their other children who remain enrolled in the School District. Unclaimed funds remaining after ninety (90) days shall be retained in the school meal account.

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may not have sufficient funds for a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the School District, the Board of Education will allow students whose accounts do not have sufficient funds available for a meal to "charge" the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms in this policy. The School District shall not charge any interest or fees in connection with any meals charged. Nothing in this policy is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt.

Students whose parents or guardians have unpaid school meal fees shall not be shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meals fees. To that end, the School District shall provide each student with the student's meal of choice for that school day of the reimbursable meal choices, if the student requests one, regardless of unpaid school meal fees. A student's parent or guardian may provide written permission to the School District to withhold a meal in the event of unpaid meal charges in excess of those permitted herein.

As part of its efforts to decrease student distress or embarrassment connected with unpaid meal charges, the School District shall not:

- a. publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means including, but not limited to, requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
- b. require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;
- c. require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals;
- d. take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees. A school or school district may attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector; or
- e. discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.

To comply with State guidelines, maintain a system for accounting for charged meals, regarding both full and reduced-price meals, and to establish a procedure for handling unpaid meal charges, the School District shall:

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, excluding extras, a la carte items and snacks;
2. all charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year
3. limit the number of charges to five (5) outstanding charges per student;
4. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals as well as collects repayments.
5. notify parents on a timely basis of outstanding charges by the automated telephone or electronic system or by mail
6. provide parents with an opportunity to establish a repayment schedule for outstanding meal charges.
7. determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals when a student owes money for five or more meals. The School District shall:
 - a. make every attempt to determine *if* a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;
 - b. make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
 - c. contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal and offer any other assistance that is appropriate

Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student charged (received) the meal, not the day the charge is paid back. When charges are paid, these monies are not to be considered "a la carte" transactions, as a section on the daily cash report or deposit summary reads "charges paid." Students shall not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases.

Families may apply for free-reduced price meals at any time during the school year. The School District's administration will discretely notify parent/guardians of students who regularly have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts of the application process for free and/or reduced price meals. Information concerning the availability of free and reduced price meals will be provided to the parents/ guardians of all students enrolled in the School District prior to the start of the school year. Parents/guardians will be advised that the application for free-reduced price meals is available on the School District's website and at all schools in the School District. The Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk can be accessed in English by clicking [here](#), and in Spanish by clicking [here](#). If the School District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals,

the school or School District shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in schools.

The School District shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or if the school or school district chooses to use an electronic meal application, provide in school enrollment packets an explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost. In addition, the School District will send a letter home to all parents/guardians on an annual basis prior to the opening day of school and, in the case of transfer students at the time of transfer, outlining the requirements of this policy. The policy shall also be published in appropriate school and School District publications.

The school homeless liaisons shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure that homeless, foster, and migrant students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

The School District will provide training to staff concerning the procedures to be utilized in the event a student's unpaid meal charges exceed five (5) outstanding charges and the manner in which affected parents/guardians will be provided with assistance in establishing eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

Staff

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the School District's food services. However, all purchases must be on a cash basis. Staff members will not be allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Cross-ref: 5405 Student Wellness
8520 Free and Reduced Price Food Services

Ref: 42 USC §1779 (Child Nutrition Act of 1966)

42 USC §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a) (National School Lunch Act) 2

CFR 200.426

7 CFR 210.9, 210.12, 210.19, 220.13, 245.5

Public Law 111-296, §143

New York Education Law §908

EAST QUOGUE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
CHARGING SCHOOL MEALS

POLICY 8505

Amendment to Policy 8505
Administrative Regulations

Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy

Purpose

The goal of the *East Quogue UFSD* is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the *East Quogue UFSD* in a way that does not stigmatize distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. The *East Quogue UFSD* provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Policy

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid,

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.

Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within 7 days of the charge and then every 7 days thereafter.

PARENT OUTREACH:

Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.

School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.

Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or hand stamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.

School will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.

Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.

Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility. NYSED provides updated direct certification data monthly.

School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.

Schools using electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.

Schools will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.

Schools will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.

Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators to certify eligible students. School liaisons required for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via www.myschoolbucks.com or with a check payable to *East Quogue School Lunch Account*. Further details are available on our webpage at WWW.eastquogue.k12.ny.us. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the *East Quogue UFSD Food Service Program*.

Ref: NY Education Law 908, section 2 of part b of Chapter 56 of the laws of 2018 *Prohibition against meal shaming*.

Adopted: 9/25/18