

SCHOOL MEAL ACCOUNT CHARGES AND COLLECTIONS**Access to School Meals and Other Food Service Items**

Parents and guardians must plan for their child to have sufficient access to food at school on each school day and must actively monitor and manage their child's school food service account. In order to help parents and guardians meet these responsibilities, the District has established the following guidelines regarding food-service charges and student access to food at school:

1. A student will always be permitted to select and receive one of the standard school meal options if either of the following apply:
 - a. The District has determined that the student is currently eligible to receive free meals at school; or
 - b. The student has sufficient prepaid funds in his/her food service account.
2. When a student purchases a school meal or any other food-service items, the general rule is that payment is due no later than at the time of service. However, the District's food service account system normally allows a family to charge up to \$35.00 in his/her account as a negative balance before the District will take steps to restrict the student's food choices. The primary purpose of allowing a limited and temporary negative balance is to prevent an unexpected interruption in meal service on a day that a student inadvertently has insufficient funds available. In addition:
 - a. The District may deny the privilege of charging items to a student who repeatedly establishes a negative account balance that is not promptly repaid upon notice of the amount owed.
 - b. A parent or guardian may arrange to restrict their child's ability to charge a negative balance or set a daily limit on food charges made to the student individual or family account.
 - c. At each meal service, a student may charge only one of the standard school meal options that is being offered (i.e., a federally-qualifying meal option that is on the menu).
3. Students who are not eligible for free school meals, who do not have money to pay for their food, who have reached their limit on unrestricted charges, and who do not bring food from home will be permitted to receive at no cost a low-cost meal that is specified by the District and that is being offered at the particular meal service.

Negative Account Balances and Collection Procedures

Family accounts will be reviewed weekly to determine account status. Once a student's account has a negative balance, the District will make an initial and follow-up attempt to collect the debt by providing the student's parent or guardian with notice (e.g., by mail, email, telephone, or similar methods) of the amount owed and will communicate that the student(s) will receive a "sack lunch" consisting of a peanut butter sandwich and a carton of milk when their family reaches negative balance of \$35.00. Payment or payment arrangements will be expected as soon as possible but no later than seven calendar days of the mailing. If these attempts are not successful, a school administrator will attempt to make a person-to-person telephone contact or schedule an in-person meeting with a parent or guardian.

A negative balance in a student food service account is a debt that is owed by the student's parent or guardian (or, if applicable, by an adult student). The District does not charge interest or impose a monetary penalty for past-due amounts owed in a student's food service account.

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If a negative balance still has not been paid after the collection efforts described in the previous paragraph, parents and guardians should be aware of the following:

1. At its discretion, the District may continue to pursue collection efforts. *
2. Debt in a student food service account is not automatically discharged, forgiven, or reduced at the end of the school year or due to a change in a student's enrollment status (e.g., graduates, transfers, drops-out, etc.).
3. Debts owed to the District's food service program may result in the denial of certain school-related privileges in the same manner that applies to other past-due school fees and charges.
4. Graduating seniors who have a negative food service balance will not be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony until this balance is paid (see School District of Rib Lake Policy #345.62).

At its discretion and to the extent permitted by law, the District may attempt to achieve collection of a food-service-program debt by placing a lien, referring the debt to a collection service, or initiating an action in small claims court. However, before the District takes any of the steps identified in this paragraph, the District will communicate the intended course of action.

Payments and Account Management

For any meals and other food service items (i.e., food or drinks) that are available for purchase and that a student is not entitled to receive for free, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student's parent or guardian to pay for the items that their child receives.

The District offers an online system that a parent or guardian can use to monitor and manage each child's school food service account. The District strongly encourages school families to establish and regularly fund a prepaid school food service account for each student in the household.

A person who needs or wishes to make a payment for a student's meals or food service account may (1) present a payment in person or with a, or (2) request consideration of other methods by contacting the District Food Service Account Manager. All payments (in the form of check or cash) can be made at the main office of the student's school during normal school hours.

The District charges a fee of \$10 for each check that is returned or denied payment by a financial institution. After a check is returned or denied payment, the District may refuse to accept payment by personal check in the future.

Additional Information and Assistance

For assistance with all issues and questions related to the District's food service program, including eligibility and applications for free or reduced-price meals, student food service accounts, the District's online account management system, as well as the specific issues addressed in these procedures, school families can refer to http://www.riblake.k12.wi.us/district/Food_Service or contact the building secretary or the district Food Service Account Manager.

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