

WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Administrative Rule for School Meal Account Charges and Collections

Parent and Guardian Responsibilities

It is the expectation that parents and/or guardians plan for their child to have sufficient access to food each school day. In addition, parents and/or guardians are encouraged to monitor and manage their child's school nutrition services account, including making prompt payment when necessary.

These procedures describe how the District will approach charges and payments for meals and other items that are offered for sale within the District's School Nutrition Services Program.

Access to School Meals and Other Nutrition Service Items

Students

When a student purchases a school meal or other nutrition services items, the general rule is that payment is due no later than at the time of service. However, a student may occasionally wish to receive a school-prepared meal or other nutrition service item that the student does not have enough money to pay for, either in hand or in a student meal account balance. Unless the student's parent or guardian has made alternative arrangements with the school, these situations will normally be handled as follows:

1. **Students (Grades K through 5)** may charge the cost of school meals with a negative balance. Upon reaching a **negative** balance of **\$10.00** collection efforts will be initiated with Parents/Guardians.
2. **Students (Grades 6 through 12) Breakfast** may charge the cost of reimbursable breakfast meals only up to a total **negative** balance of **\$20.00**. At this amount the student account will be deactivated until payment is made. Parents/Guardians will be notified by letter and phone that the student meal account has been deactivated.
3. **Students (grades 6 through 12) Lunch** may charge the cost of reimbursable lunch meals only up to a total **negative** balance of **\$10.00**. At this amount students will be offered an alternate sandwich and/or milk at Ala Carte pricing only up to a total **negative** balance of **\$20.00**. At this amount the student account will be deactivated until payment is made. Parents/Guardians will be notified by letter and phone that the student meal account has been deactivated.

4. **Ala Carte (extra items)** privileges are suspended when a student's balance becomes negative.

In addition, even if a student's household owes a debt within the School Nutrition Services Program, a student will always be permitted to select and receive a regular school meal at the time of meal service if either:

1. The District has determined that the student is currently eligible to receive free meals at school; or
2. The student has sufficient prepaid funds in his/her nutrition services account, or enough money in hand, to pay for the meal on the day the meal is purchased; or
3. The parent/guardian has contacted the school's Nutrition Service Manager or the Director of School Nutrition Services and has made arrangements for payment of the negative balance; or
4. The student has tray in hand at the point of sale cashier area.

Staff

Staff may purchase meals or other items through the School Nutrition Services Program. If necessary, staff may accrue a **negative** balance of **\$10.00**. If a **negative** balance of **\$10.00** is reached, the account will be placed on hold until payment is received.

Negative Account Balances notification to students and households

The District's preferred means of addressing all issues with a student's nutrition services account, meal payments, and access to sufficient food while at school shall be direct and timely communication with a parent or guardian.

1. The District will not inform a student in Grades K-5 of his/her account balance. All communication regarding Grades K-5 nutrition services negative account balances shall be direct and timely communication with a parent or guardian.
2. The District may inform a student in Grades 6-12 of his/her current account balance and any restrictions that apply to his/her food selections and charges.

Negative Account Balances and Collection Procedures

The District encourages families to establish and regularly fund a prepaid nutrition services account for each child in the household. A negative balance in a student nutrition services account is a debt that is owed by the student's parent or guardian (or, if applicable, by an adult student).

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, etc.) of the amount owed. Payment is due immediately upon notice. If these attempts are not successful, a school official will attempt to make contact or schedule a meeting with a parent or guardian. The District and the parent or guardian may discuss payment plan options.

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. The District may continue to pursue collection efforts.
2. Debt in a student nutrition services 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, etc.).
3. The District normally will not refer the debt to a third-party collection agency or file a lien or suit unless efforts to reduce the debt remain unchanged for 60 days. At its discretion and to the extent permitted by law, the District may attempt to achieve collection of a nutrition services program debt by placing a lien, referring the debt to a collection service, or initiating an action in small claims court. However, before any of these steps are taken, the District will communicate the intended course of action to the person responsible for payment with a final notice of the amount due.

Payments and Account Management

For any meals and other nutrition services food items (i.e., food or drinks) that are available for purchase 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 their child receives.

The District offers an online system that a parent or guardian may use to monitor and manage each child's nutrition services account, including making payments. There is a fee of \$1.95 when a transaction is made using the online account management system. The District strongly encourages families to establish and regularly fund a prepaid school nutrition services account for each child in the household.

In addition to using the online account system to make payments, a person who needs to make payment for student meals may:

1. Place funds in pre-payment envelopes and place inside the student's take-home folder (for elementary students) and parents should verify the payment was deposited; or
2. Place payment in the school's secure School Nutrition Services deposit box during normal school hours; or
3. Bring payment to the school's main office; or
4. Request consideration of other methods of payment by contacting the school's Nutrition Manager or the Director of School Nutrition Services at 715-261-0806.

A person making payment to a student nutrition services account who wishes to designate specific amounts as either repayment of a debt or prepayment of future charges should contact the School Nutrition Services Department at 715-261-0806 to establish how the specific payment should be applied to the account. Except for money that is brought to school for the specific purpose of purchasing a meal at the time of service, general payments that are directed to a student's nutrition services account default to payment of any outstanding balance first, with any remaining amount treated as a prepayment.

The District charges a fee of \$12.00 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.

Donations to pay debts in student food service accounts

When donations of money are accepted and used for the specific purpose of covering unpaid balances (in full or in part) in student nutrition services accounts, the District shall consider the debt repaid and discharged to the extent covered by the donation(s). Except as provided in any terms or contingencies that are attached to a specific gift and that have been accepted by the District or School Nutrition Services Department personnel shall normally aggregate (e.g., annually or more often) any donations that have been received for the purpose of covering unpaid balances and then apply the total amount on a pro-rata basis (either equal dollars per student or an equal percentage of the amount owed) across the negative-balance account(s) of households that the District has identified as being in financial need of such assistance. Where the amount of such donations makes this preferred approach impractical, the Director of School Nutrition Services may approve an alternative approach that still prioritizes applying the available funds to the nutrition service accounts of one or more households in financial need.

Account Transfers and Refunds

Account Transfers: Account funds may be transferred from one student account to another OR to the School Meal Assistance Account. The School Meal Assistance Account is used to pay for meals of students in need at the discretion of the Director of School Nutrition Services.

A request to transfer funds may be made by calling the School Nutrition Services Department at 715-261-0806 or by emailing April Susa at asusa@wausauschools.org.

Refunds: If money is left in an account upon graduation, or a student moves out of the District, a refund may be obtained by submitting a written request to the School Nutrition Services Department at 650 South 7th Avenue, Wausau WI 54401. Refund should be received in 4-6 weeks. For students moving out of the District, a forwarding address must be provided. It is the requester's responsibility to follow up if the request is not received in a timely manner. Account balance information can be obtained by calling the School Nutrition Services Department at 715-261-0806.

Transferring Students: Parents/Guardians should contact the School Nutrition Services Department when students withdraw from the District. The School Nutrition Services Department will provide households the option of donating funds to the Meal Assistance Account or to receive a refund. Funds not donated to the Meal Assistance Account, will be issued to households with balances of \$10.00 or greater to the student's primary contact. Funds less than \$10.00 must be picked up in person at the School Nutrition Services office within 30 days of notification. Funds less than \$10.00 remaining after 30 days from notification will be placed into the School Nutrition Services Department account.

Graduating Seniors: Upon high school graduation, the School Nutrition Services Department will transfer funds from graduating students to siblings, if applicable. The Department will contact households with remaining funds to provide the option of donating funds to the Meal Assistance Account or to receive a refund. Funds not donated to the Meal Assistance Account, will be issued to households with balances of \$10.00 or greater to the student's primary contact. Funds less than \$10.00 must be picked up in person at the School Nutrition Services office within 30 days of notification. Funds less than \$10.00 remaining after 30 days from notification will be placed into the School Nutrition Services Department account.

Reclassification of delinquent debt as bad debt within the Nonprofit School Nutrition Service Account (NSFSA).

In consultation with the District's financial auditors, as needed, the Chief Finance and Business Services Officer and the Director of School Nutrition Services shall develop

procedures and criteria for the reclassification of long-term delinquent debt within student nutrition services accounts as uncollectible bad debt. Such procedures and criteria shall be consistent with the following general parameters:

1. Unless an active payment plan is in place or other attempts at collection are actively being pursued, delinquent debt in a student nutrition services account that has not been repaid within 90 days from the date a student is unenrolled from the District shall normally be reclassified as bad debt for purposes of the District's NSFSA.
2. The reclassification of a delinquent debt to a bad debt as an accounting of allowed costs within the District's NSFSA does not prevent the District from continuing to track the unpaid debt, accepting payment for the debt, refusing to extend further credit or offer other payment plans to the debtor household, or applying other District policies and rules related to unpaid charges and fees.

Application for Free or Reduced-Price Meals

An application for free and reduced-price meals can be submitted at any time during the school year, unless a specific exception applies (such as the temporary carryover of prior eligibility). Parents and guardians who submit an application remain responsible for payment of school meals and charges their child incurs until approval is granted. In addition, approval of an application does not eliminate or reduce any charges that were accumulated prior to the date the application was submitted.

Additional Information and Assistance

For assistance with all issues and questions related to the District's School Nutrition Services 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 specific issues addressed in these procedures, families can refer to Wausau School District website (www.wausauschools.org) or call the School Nutrition Services Department at 715-261-0806.

Legal References: **Wisconsin State Statutes:** [Section 115.34](#)
[Section 115.341](#)
[Section 115.343](#)
[Section 115.347](#)

Federal Law: [42 U.S.C. §1758\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)](#)