

MERTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOOD SERVICE ACCOUNT BALANCE GUIDELINES

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guideline is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department. Therefore, the goals are:

- To establish a consistent district guidelines regarding charges and collection of charges.
- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.
- To support positive situations with district staff, students and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish guidelines that are age appropriate.
- To encourage parents/guardians to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

The Food Service Department: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying Administration of low or outstanding balances.

The School District: Responsible for supporting the Food Service Department and implementing guidelines and procedures for the District.

The Parent/Guardian: Monitoring of their family lunch account in order to maintain a positive balance at all times.

III. ADMINISTRATION:

1) All Students

- a. Free lunch status students will not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Free lunch status allows a child to receive a free reimbursable meal every day. A la Carte items, milk purchases only or purchasing additional milk are not part of the USDA program and these transactions will be allowed only if there are funds in the student's account.
- b. Reduced lunch status allows a child to receive reduced priced meals at a reduced amount determined by the Department of Food and Nutrition. Reduced lunch status students will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum dollar amount of \$10.00, which will be known as the "account cap."
 - i. When the student, or family, whichever comes first, reaches the "account cap", they will only be provided and charged for a reduced price reimbursable Meal. Ala Carte items, milk purchases and extra entrees will not be allowed.

- c. Elementary and Middle school students, not receiving free food services, will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum dollar amount of \$10.00, which will be known as the “account cap.”
 - i. When the student, or family, whichever comes first, reaches the “account cap”, they will only be provided and charged for a reimbursable Meal. Ala Carte items, milk purchases and extra entrees will not be allowed.

2) Balances Owed

- a. **Collection of Balances Owed** will be handled by the Business Office or an outside vendor for collections, selected by the Board of Education. This will apply to any account balance at the “account cap” at any time and any payments made by check that are returned to the district by the bank with notice of “insufficient funds.” Balances may be checked at any time by logging into the student’s Skyward Family Access account or by sending an email to the Food Service Director. All accounts must be settled at the end of a school year.
- b. **Checks Returned for Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF):** When a check is returned to the Business Office for “NSF”, an email or letter will be sent from the Business Office to inform the parents/guardians. Payment for the NSF check, along with an assessed NSF administration fee, must be in the form of cash, cashier’s check, or money order. Payments must be received within ten (10) days of the date of the letter. The NSF fee and the amount of the check will be charged to the student/students food service account immediately upon notice from the bank and the above mentioned rules will take effect.
- c. **Balances Owed With No Response by Parent/Guardian:** If the payment is not received, the Superintendent and his/her designee may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law or regulation:
 - i. Delay the issuance of report cards, transfer cards, and class activities until obligations are met.
 - ii. Prohibit participation of the student in the food service program.
 - iii. Prohibit participation of student or other students in the student’s household from participating in any future fee based program until or unless outstanding balances are resolved.
 - iv. Prohibit student participation in graduation exercises.
 - v. May result in further legal actions.

- 3) The food service program must begin to close the books during the last 10 serviceable meal days of the school year. As a result, the point of sale system will

be blocked from accepting deficit account balances including the “account cap” limits.

1. Students who forget to bring money or have a zero balance will only be offered a designated menu alternate. Sample: reimbursable meal.
 2. All charges not paid before the end of the school year will be carried forward into the next school year.
 3. All graduating families will receive a notice in May of remaining money in their lunch account. They can elect to donate remaining funds to the District’s Angel “Principal” Fund account or receive a refund. All refund requests will be sent to the food service office and then forwarded to the Business Office for payment.
- 4) All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain a record of all monies deposited and spent for each student and said record will be made available to the parent upon request. The Food Service Program or the school district’s Food Service Management Company shall recommend to parents that meals can be paid for in advance and the balances maintained in their child’s account to minimize the possibility that the child may be without meal money on any given day. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the Business Office will investigate the situation more closely, including contacting the parent/guardian to bring money to the school and/or encouraging the parent to apply for free or reduced price meals.
1. **Blocks on Accounts:** A parent may email the Food Service Director or log into their Skyward Family Access account to place a block on their child’s account to prohibit the purchase of a la carte items or to set a dollar cap. The Business Manager may instruct the Food Service Director to place a block on a student’s account due to non-payment of district fees or other collection issues.
 2. **Refunds:**
 - a. Withdrawn Students: For any student who is withdrawn, a written request for a refund of any money remaining in his/her account must be submitted. An email request is also acceptable.
 - b. Graduating Students: Families who are graduating at the end of the school year may request a refund, ask to donate funds or keep the remaining funds in the account for siblings returning the following school year.
 3. **Unclaimed Funds:** All refunds must be requested within one year of graduation or withdrawal from the District. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Merton Community School District Food Service Program.

Note: All funds collected by the Food Service Management Company are the property of the Merton Community School District under the authority of the Board of Education. All funds are deposited into a bank account controlled by the Business Manager. It is from this fund that the Food Service Management Company is paid for goods and services required to operate the program.