

MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with state and federal law, the Mason City Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

Payment of Meals

Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches \$0.00 a student may charge no more than \$25.00 to this account. When an account has a negative balance a student shall not be allowed to charge a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Funds may be added to a meal account in one of the following ways:

- 1) Online via a debit or credit card by going to TouchBase (<https://ia-masoncity.intouchreceiving.com/>);
- 2) Cash/Check/debit or credit card to any of the school building offices or the Administrative Center Business Office; or
- 3) Cash or check to the cashiers in the cafeteria (this is available only at Mason City High School and John Adams Middle School).

Free/reduced applications are available throughout the year on the District website, each attendance center and the Administrative Center. Applications must be completed each year. Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Students with outstanding meal charge debt shall be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

Employees may use a charge account for meals. Employees may not carry a negative balance. When an employee account reaches \$0.00, an employee will not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Families will begin receiving notices from the district's automated notification system when a student's meal account balance reaches \$7.00. Negative balances not paid prior to graduation, transferring from/leaving the district, or registering for the next school year will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options for collection may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

Communication of the Policy

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information were communicated to households and staff will be retained.

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Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 *et seq.*
7 C.F.R. §§ 210 *et seq.*
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 46-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: LOCAL MEAL CHARGE POLICIES (2016).
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 47-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: CLARIFICATION ON COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT MEAL PAYMENTS (2016).
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 57-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: GUIDANCE AND Q&A (2016).
Iowa Code ch. 283A.
281 I.A.C. 58.

Cross Reference: 710.1 School Food Program
710.2 Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility
710.3 Vending Machine

Approved 04-17-17 Reviewed _____ Revised _____