

# NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOLS, INC.

## POLICY 534

### UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

#### POLICY MANAGEMENT

*Adopted: 8/2018*

*Reviewed/ Revised\*: 11/20\*, 11/23*

*Mandatory: Yes*

*Frequency: Every 3 years*

*Distribution: School website and available on request*

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school's nutrition program and that school 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 and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

#### **II. PAYMENT OF MEALS**

- A. Students have a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a student may charge no more than a week's worth of meals to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student may not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid.
- B. If the school receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- C. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.
- D. The school may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal will be charged to the student's account or otherwise charged to the student.
- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.

### III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

### IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances of more than the sum of a week's worth of meals, not paid prior to end of the school year, may be turned over to the principal or principal's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. The school may not enlist the assistance of non-school employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies or other commencement activities due to unpaid meal charges.

### V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided on the school's website and from the main office upon request.

#### ***Legal References:***

Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4  
42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)  
7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)  
C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)  
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (*Letter to Ricker*)