

ATLANTA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Food Service Meal Charging Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Atlanta Community Schools goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote health eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges. It is the policy of Atlanta Community Schools to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.

Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. The district requests that all families apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits even if they think they will not qualify. The Food Service Department may have Incentives for the class that turns in the most applications.

CHARGE POLICY

Payment for school lunch meals is expected at the time of purchase. Breakfast is free to all students daily. Parents or guardians are encouraged to monitor their child's meal account balance online and keep an adequate amount of funds in the child's account. To request online Family Access to view your student's school meal account call the school office and request a log-in and password to Family Access on Skyward.

It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to pay for or pack a child's lunch when sending them to school. The Food Service Department recognized there might be occasions when a parent or guardian forgets to do so. Although we strongly discourage this practice, as a courtesy to families; the following charge policy is in place:

Elementary School Students:

- May charge up to five (5) lunches
- An emergency meal will be made available after 5 charges. The emergency lunch consists of a cheese sandwich on whole grain bread, a serving of fruit and white milk. The meal will be charged to the student's account and the parent will be responsible for the outstanding charge.
- A la carte items, including milk, cannot be charged.
- No charging allowed two (2) weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- All meal charges must be paid off by the end of the school year. Any unpaid charges will be carried forward to the next school year and count toward the student's ability to charge.

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- Money remaining in a student's account will be carried forward to the next school year.
- Students are not permitted to purchase any a la carte items if they owe any unpaid charges.
- Students may not be permitted to participate in school events if they owe any unpaid charges.

Middle School and High School Students:

- May charge up to five (5) lunch
- An emergency meal will be made available after 5 charges. The emergency lunch consists of a cheese sandwich on whole grain bread, a serving of fruit and white milk. The meal will be charged to the student's account and the parent will be responsible for the outstanding charge.
- A la carte items, including milk, cannot be charged.
- No charging allowed two (2) weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- All meal charges must be paid off by the end of the school year. Any unpaid charges will be carried forward to the next school year and count toward the student's ability to charge.
- Money remaining in a student's account will be carried forward to the next school year.
- Students are not permitted to purchase any a la carte items if they owe any unpaid charges.
- Students may not be permitted to participate in school events if they owe any unpaid charges. This includes the privilege to walk in Graduation Ceremonies.

UNPAID CHARGES

To avoid unpaid charges, parents or guardians are encouraged to monitor and/or pay on their child's meal account with cash or check. The school recognize the importance of eating a healthy meal while at school, and have worked with their Food Service staff on a plan to remind parents when charges are near their limit. Once the student nears his/her limit, the Food Service staff could provide any of the following reminders in an effort to help the student continue to receive school meals:

- Student receives a verbal reminder
- Parent or guardian will receive a monthly balance notification via mail
- E-mail
- Telephone call

Parents and guardians are responsible to pay off their child's meal account. Any unpaid charges at the end of the school year remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian and will follow the student to the next school year.

UNUSED ACCOUNT BALANCES

If your child has a balance left in his/her account at the time of graduation or withdrawal from school, you can request a refund for an amount over \$5.00 by requesting a refund in writing. Or, you can "Pay it Forward" by donating your student's account balance to a needy student's school meal account.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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