

# Standish-Sterling Community School District

Standish, Michigan 48658

## Meal Charge Policy

The Standish-Sterling Community School District has a meal charge policy that applies at all schools for students and staff. The District realizes that there are times when staff and students may forget their lunch money. To ensure that staff and students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible staff, student, and parent behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the District, the Board of Education will allow staff and students who may forget meal money to “charge” the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms of this policy.

Food Services is a special revenue fund which means it does not receive general fund support from the district, and thus must generate funds through meal sales, snack sales, and federal and state reimbursement in order to pay operating expenses and fees to the district. Therefore, unpaid charges affect the ability of Food Service to support itself and its employees.

Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) have provided schools with administrative guidelines and policy for meal charges. Following the administrative guidelines from MDE and NSLP, Standish-Sterling Community Schools will adhere to the following meal charge policy:

1. A staff or student may charge up to three (3) meals maximum (one charge per meal).
2. Schools may offer alternate meals to students who have used their three charges. There are two (2) approaches to offering alternate meals:
  - A. Schools may offer an alternate meal that is not eligible for reimbursement, for example, a cheese

sandwich and milk. In a case where a student has 3 charged meals, the student will need to be able to purchase meals and if not, at lunch a child will be provided with a cheese sandwich (2 slices of bread and 1 slice of cheese) and milk. In the situation of a student who is lactose intolerant, then a peanut butter and jelly sandwich as an alternative will be provided, if medically appropriate.

B. Schools may offer an alternate meal that is eligible for reimbursement, where the meal meets the meal pattern requirements, for example, a cheese sandwich, apple, carrot sticks, and milk.

3. If a student has a charge balance, the school must provide a meal when the student is using money to pay for the current day's meal or future meals.
4. It is permissible for schools to serve only one (1) particular set of food items to children whose parents owe the school money, as long as the food items comprise a reimbursable meal.
5. A staff or student who has charged a meal may not charge or purchase "ala carte" item(s), including extra main entrees or make purchases in the snack room.
6. If a student repeatedly comes to school with no lunch and no money, food service employees must report this to the building administrator. It could be a sign of abuse or neglect and the proper authorities should be contacted.
7. Schools may deny a meal to a student who pays reduced or full price and who does not provide the required payment for that meal.

8. The food service director will coordinate communications with the parent/guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges.
9. If cafeteria services staff suspects that a student may be abusing this policy, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian that if he/she continues to abuse this policy, the privilege of charging meals will be refused.
10. All accounts must be settled at the end of a school year. Letters will be sent home approximately four to five days before the last day of school to students who have any negative balances. Negative balances will result in report cards being held until the balance is paid in full. Negative balances not paid in full thirty (30) days prior to the start of the following school year will force the District to take action to collect unpaid funds by means of collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method deemed necessary by the District.
11. The District cannot go on indefinitely feeding students for free. Unlimited “charged” meals would not be fair to the vast majority of students/parents who are paying for their lunches. Unpaid lunches would ultimately affect lunch prices.

Darren S. Kroczaleski, Superintendent

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