



AMENDED CHARGE POLICY & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM

Dear Student, Parent or Guardian:

Enclosed is a new brochure, *A guide to school meals and our charge policy*, which contains important information about the district's school meals program and highlights recent changes to the school meals policy. Changes to the policy are highlighted in red on the brochure and are listed here as well. The # corresponds to the numbered statement in *The Collection Process* box on the brochure.

- ◇ 1) **Weekly letters from the Principal to parent/guardian for all accounts with negative balance of \$5.00 or more.**
- ◇ 4) Failure to bring account into good standing **within ten (10) days** will result in...
- ◇ 5) If a student's account balance exceeds **-\$25.00**, the administration may...
- ◇ 6) At the end of a **trimester** or school year the administration may...

In an effort to increase understanding of the school meals program and the charge policy, some frequently asked questions are answered below.

Sincerely,

The Food & Nutritional Services Department

10 FAQs about School Meals

1. What is a "reimbursable meal"?

For lunch, the federal government, specifically the USDA, defines a "reimbursable meal" or a complete meal, as a meal that consists of at least 3 of the 5 components that are offered daily **and** one of those choices must be a full serving of fruit or vegetable. Fruits and vegetables are offered in full serving sizes.

2. What is a "component"?

Think of a "component" as a food group. The 5 daily components include a protein, a grain, a fruit, a vegetable, and milk. The daily options are labeled in each cafeteria. At the elementary cafeterias, the daily options for each component are listed on charts near the beginning of the serving line. At the middle/high school cafeteria, daily options are labeled on the serving line. We think this helps students choose a reimbursable meal.

3. Why do I have to take a reimbursable meal?

You do not need to take a reimbursable meal, however, you will be charged full price for the components you choose, regardless if you are a paying student or are eligible for free or reduced price meals. If you are eligible for a free or a reduced price meal, the USDA will only reimburse the district if you choose a reimbursable meal. If the government won't pay for the meal, then the student has to.

It's easy to choose a minimum of 3 of the 5 daily components, just be sure that one is a fruit or a vegetable. To get the best deal for your money, consider taking all that is available that day. Have you made a salad from the options on the veggie bar? If not, try it tomorrow.

4. What does it mean to "charge" a meal?

Charging a meal means that a student does not have payment for a meal. It means that they do not have cash, a check or money in their school meals account. (Every student in the district has a school meals account.) By School Committee policy, the student may purchase the meal on credit and charge it to their account. This creates a negative balance on their account. Students are allowed to charge within a certain limit. Paying students are allowed to charge up to \$15.00 and students eligible for reduced price meals are allowed to charge up to \$4.00. The collection process begins when accounts have negative balances greater than these limits.

5. Why do I have to pay full price for a second slice of pizza?

Snacks and some components of a meal, for example milk, is sold on an “a la carte” basis, which means that it is sold separately. A second entrée, however, is not sold separately and is considered a second meal and costs full price. If you choose to take a second meal, get the best deal for your money by choosing more than just the second entree. **Please understand, second meals cannot be charged. If you do not have cash or money on your account, the second meal will be taken away at the register.**

6. How do I know what the balance is in my school meals account?

There are several ways to get your balance:

- ◊ Ask any cashier
- ◊ Call the Superintendent’s Office (978-355-4668 ext 8509 or 8512)
- ◊ Email the director (kdubois-gould@qrsd.org)
- ◊ Download a free app for your Iphone or Android
- ◊ Create a free account at myschoolbucks.com – you can check a balance and see activity in the account for free!

7. What does it mean to “pre-pay” for meals and how can I do it?

Pre-paying for meals means that money has been deposited into a student’s school meals account. At the register, the cashier uses the money on the account to pay for your daily purchase. There are 2 ways to pre-pay meals:

- ◊ by giving the cashier additional cash or a check at the register and asking that they put it on your account; or,
- ◊ by creating an account on myschoolbucks.com and using the payment option – there is a \$1.95 flat charge for each payment made online using myschoolbucks.com. This fee does not benefit Quabbin Regional School District; it goes to the company to pay for website and program upgrades.

8. What if I forget my PIN?

Your cashier can access your school meals account by your last name. Ask them to tell you your PIN or ask them to write it down for you. For students who have a cell phone, we suggest that you enter your PIN into your contacts. Please remember that your PIN should be kept confidential. Students, Parents or Guardians are responsible for all purchases made on your school meals account. Your cashier does check the school picture on the account to ensure a proper transaction.

9. If I received free or reduced price meals last year, why do I have to fill out a form this year?

This is a federal government rule. The MA Free & Reduced Price School Meals Application **must** be completed each school year. There is a carryover period of 30 serving days into the next school year, but if you miss that deadline, meals must be charged at full price until a new application is received, processed and accepted. Any meals charged after the deadline **cannot** be reversed.

10. Why am I being charged for meals when I have been approved for free or reduced price meals?

There are two reasons that there may be amounts charged to your account if you are eligible for a free or a reduced price meal:

- ◊ You did not choose a reimbursable meal (at least 3 of the 5 daily components, one of them being a fruit or vegetable); or,
- ◊ You took a second meal. Remember, if you do not have cash or money on your account, you may not take a second meal.

Do you have a question that is not on this list?

Visit the Food & Nutritional Services Department’s webpage on the district’s website. There is a lot of good information there. Go to www.qrsd.org and click on Nutrition in the blue menu bar.

If you need assistance, please contact the Food & Nutritional Services Department. We are here to assist you. Call us at 978-355-4668 extension 8509 or 8512. Or email the director, Keri DuBois-Gould at kdubois-gould@qrsd.org.