

Hanover Public Schools

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Memorandum

To: Hanover School Committee
From: Thomas R. Raab, Assistant Superintendent
Cc: Matthew A. Ferron, Superintendent of Schools
Date: March 11, 2020
Re: Student Lunch Debt Procedures

Last year, the School Committee approved the Student Meal Charge Policy below; however, at that time, we chose to table the procedure document for further review. Lynn Petrowski, Food Services Director, and I wanted some time work on the procedures that accompany the policy. Please find procedures attached to this cover memo. These procedures put the burden of payment on the parents/guardians and strive to treat all students on the lunch line with dignity and respect. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

STUDENT MEAL CHARGE POLICY

Hanover Public Schools recognizes that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn. Additionally, Title 7, CFR 210.10 General Nutrition Requirements states "Schools must provide nutritious and well-balanced meals to all the children they serve".

In accordance with this regulation, Hanover Public Schools will not deny any student access to school lunch. However, by statute, the district's Food Service Department is a self-supporting fund that shall not carry a student's negative balance forward at the close of the fiscal year.

In order to ensure compliance of all who participate in the school meal program procedures for methods of meal payment, charging parameters, and debt collection methods have been incorporated into the school nutrition department policy and procedures manual.

LEGAL REFS: 7 CFR 210, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87
M.G.L. Chapter 71: Section 72. Sales of Lunches
HHFKA, Public Law 111-296

Hanover Public Schools

Meal Charges and Debt Collection Procedure

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this procedure is to establish consistent meal account charging and collection methods throughout the school district. The goals of these procedures are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the service line regarding their meal account status.
- To support positive interactions with student(s), parent(s)/guardian(s), and district staff to the maximum extent possible.
- To encourage parents/guardians to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.
- To establish a consistent district procedure regarding charges and collection of charges.

II. Scope of Responsibility:

- Food Service Department-Responsible for maintaining records of charges and for notifying the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) of negative account balances. The Food Service Director is responsible for notifying the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance in a timely manner.
- Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance-Responsible for supporting and assisting the Food Service Director and site designees in the collection process.
- School Administration/Designee(s)-Responsible for assisting the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance in the collection process as needed.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s)-Responsible for full payment of outstanding or delinquent balance.

III. Administration of Procedure:

The school district administration is responsible for ensuring that the student meal accounts are properly managed and accurately reported with the goal of eliminating negative balances and delinquent accounts.

Parent(s) and guardian(s) are encouraged to make payments via the online payment system in place. By registering for an account, parent(s)/guardian(s) can choose to receive e-mail alerts for low balances, set up automatic deposits to the student's account or schedule payments to add funds to the student's account. There will be a minimal fee for using the online payment option. This fee does not benefit the Hanover Food Service Department. Payment is also accepted at the cash register in the form of cash or check which is added to the student's account and immediately available.

- **Student accounts:** Any student whose school meal account has a zero or negative balance will be allowed to charge a reimbursable meal. A reimbursable

meal is defined as a meal consisting of at least three (3) or the five (5) offered meal components and must include a serving of fruit and/or vegetables in order to meet the federal requirements. This will result in a negative balance on the student's account until funds are added to offset the negative balance.

Students with a negative balance will not be allowed to purchase a la carte foods or beverages, this includes purchase of a second meal.

- **Negative balances:** Once an account is negative, the Food Service Director will send weekly emails through the point of sale system alerting parent(s)/guardian(s) and requesting immediate payment. The Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance will send letters home monthly to those students/families who maintain a negative balance. Building administrators may initiate phone calls to the household in order to assist in debt collection.

If a graduating senior's account is not in good standing as of May 1st, the administration may prohibit participation in senior activities.

- **Purchasing controls:** Parent(s)/guardian(s) may contact in writing, the Food Service Director to place controls on their student's account to prohibit the purchase of a la carte items or to set spending restrictions.

If financial hardship is suspected, families will be encouraged to apply for free/reduced meals at any time during the school year. As required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), negative balances should not incur against the food service revolving account at fiscal year-end. The district is responsible for collection of outstanding balances and held accountable for this requirement by the DESE.