

ENTHEOS ACADEMY

EXCELLENCE • SERVICE • LEADERSHIP

3301 MEAL CHARGE

Purpose

- I. National School Lunch, Breakfast, Special (Kindergarten) Milk and the After School Snack Program are federal programs in which this school participates. Pricing policies for school meals are determined at the local level, including decisions about whether or not to extend credit to parents who do not have meal money in their students' accounts or whether or not to provide alternate meals to such students.
- II. Entheos Academy receives partial reimbursement for meals served to students who do not qualify for free meals. Parents must make payments to a student's account to make up the difference between the federal reimbursement and the cost of the meal. This policy applies only to school meal payments, not a la carte sales.
- III. If students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch, their meals are reimbursed in whole or in part with federal funds. Otherwise, the meal reimbursement is minimal and parents are expected to pay for their student(s') meals.
- IV. The purpose of this policy is to explain how Entheos Academy will notify parents/guardians about: money owed for student meals; of the school's procedures for providing meals if students' accounts are delinquent; and to assure and remind parents and school employees that students will never be confronted or embarrassed about money owed for school meals.

Definitions

- I. "Meal Charges" are any transactions made with the Entheos in exchange for food through the lunch, breakfast or other food and meal programs provided by Entheos Academy
- II. "Family Accounts" are the grouping of meal charges by associated family members attending Entheos Academy schools
- III. "Automated Meal Payment System" (COMPASS) means a web based system which allows parents to review funds in students' meal accounts, informs parents of account balances and student meal payments and sends messages to the parent when funds in the account are low.
- IV. "Collection Efforts" means a collection agency or other means that Entheos Academy uses to collect delinquent lunch balances or contacts to parents by phone, mail, or other

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efforts to recoup unpaid meal balances. Entheos Academy may not withhold student records for unpaid school meal balances.

- V. “Delinquent Account” means a student’s meal fund account that does not have adequate funds to cover the meal charges by student/parent. Entheos Academy nutrition program is responsible for the collection of funds in advance of the meal being served, but the school has the responsibility for the collection of delinquent accounts.
- VI. “Free Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents have qualified, based on federal standards, for free meals. The free meal receives the highest federal rate of reimbursement. The meal is served at no cost to the student
- VII. “Meal Charging” means allowing students who do not have funds in their account to receive a reimbursable meal, with parents or other sources paying for these meals at a later time. Entheos Academy is not required by state or federal law to provide meals to students who do not have the funds to pay for the meal.
- VIII. “Parent” means a student’s parent, legal guardian, or person acting as the parent for school purposes.
- IX. “Paid Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents have not qualified for reduced-price or free meals. This meal receives the lowest amount of federal reimbursement. The parent must pay the lunch price established by Entheos Academy board.
- X. “Point of Service” means the place at the end of the line where meal payments and counting of reimbursable meals occurs.
- XI. “Reduced-Price Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents qualify for reduced-price meals. The federal rate of reimbursement for a reduced-price meal is less than for a free meal, but more than for a paid meal.
- XII. “Reimbursable Meal” means a meal which meets the USDA requirements and may be claimed for payment from USDA.

Policy

Prepayment

Entheos Academy provides meal services in accordance with National School Lunch Programs and State guidelines. Entheos Academy highly encourages all families to prepay for all school meals and have available a secure box at each school for cash and check payments. A credit card payment method is made available through the school website.

Free and Reduced Lunch

- I. Free/Reduced lunch applications will be made available to parents and guardians in the following ways:

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- A. The front office during the school year
 - B. Sent home in paper form at parent or guardian request
 - C. Emailed at parent or guardian request
 - D. During registration each year
- II. If the student's family receives benefits from the Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Family Employment Program (FEP) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the household qualifies for meals at no charge, once the school receives notice of student's or family's eligibility, and does not have to complete or submit a free/reduced-price form. Schools will send the household an e-mail/letter informing parents of a student's eligibility for free meals. If a parent or family qualifies under one of these programs and has not received such a letter before school starts, the parent should contact the school food service.

Meal Charges

- I. Meal charges are tracked daily and are able to be viewed by parents via the Automated Payment system (COMPASS) portal. Instructions to access the parent portal are available at the front office at any time.
- II. All lunch accounts are "family" accounts. This enables parents to add payments and track each child in one location. Students will never be told of account balances unless they ask. Students will never be told of their free/reduced status, regardless of inquiry.
- III. Entheos Academy each student's meal service, that the meal is reimbursable or non-reimbursable.
- IV. Entheos Academy shall credit meal payments from parents to the student's account before the meal period for funds collect the day before. This assures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts in advance of students selecting school meals. Schools will apply payments to the purchase of the current day's meal first, and the payment of past-due accounts second.
- V. If a student/family qualifies for free meals, no payments are due.
- VI. If a family qualifies for reduced-price meals, the school will charge no more than \$.40 for lunch or \$.30 for breakfast.
- VII. Parents may make payments to the school by the Automated Payment System for online payments, mail or hand delivery. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited. Entheos Academy accepts online payments, checks, money orders and/or cash.

The charges will be as follows:

- I. Lunch
 - A. reduced \$0.40
 - B. K-5 \$2.00

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- C. 6-8 \$2.15
 - D. 9 \$2.25
 - E. A La Carte Milk/Juice \$.30
 - F. Visitor: \$3.30
- II. Breakfast
- A. Reduced \$0.30
 - B. k-9 \$1.25
 - C. A La Carte Milk/Juice \$.30

Negative Balances

All students who request a lunch will be fed regardless of family account balance. Any student requesting an additional milk/juice that has a negative family account will be denied the extra a la carte item to minimize the burden to the parents.

- I. Negative lunch account balances will be notified of status in the following manner.
- A. Daily emails are sent to parents that have a negative family lunch account balance. This email is system generated and goes out at the same time every day.
 - 1. When a family lunch account exceeds -\$20.00, a personal email is sent to the parents.
 - B. If the family lunch account stays in the negative for 3 weeks a 2nd notice letter will be sent via U.S. mail.
 - C. If the family has made no attempt on the lunch account and it continues to stay in the negative for an additional 3 weeks a 3rd notice will be sent via email and U.S. mail. This letter is signed by the school director.
 - D. If the family lunch account remains negative for more than 90 days and all collection attempts have been ignored, a final notice with the explanation that the account will be turned over to a collection agency will be sent via priority U.S. mail.
 - 1. This notice will have a 15 day deadline.
 - 2. This final letter will state that charges still may occur and they are still responsible for them.

Additional Information

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funds for meals served in schools, including breakfast, lunch, after-school snacks and special milk. Federally funded programs are subject to the cost principles outlined in Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 225, Appendix B (formerly known as Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87), which states “bad debts, including losses arising from uncollectible accounts and other claims, related

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collection costs and related legal costs are unallowable.” When parents fail to pay for school meals, the school can be hurt financially.

Overt identification: no discrimination against any student is allowed because of their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals (7 CFR 210.9 (b) (12)).

All schools participating in the National School Lunch Program have signed a free and reduced price policy statement. Schools should review the policy to assure they understand the implications and responsibilities of providing meals in the program. The school meal program has additional options for schools located in high poverty areas which eliminate student payment for meals entirely.

According to a study conducted by the School Nutrition Association (SNA) (“School District charge Policy and Procedure Components,” Dec., 2008), the following table shows the number or amount of meal charges allowed before action is taken.

Allowable Charges

| | # of Meals | Dollar Range |
|---------|------------|--------------|
| Range | 1-10 | \$4-\$75 |
| Average | 3 | |
| Median | 3 | |