Meal Payments and Free and Reduced Meal Applications

The Omaha Public Schools District recognizes students need access to nutritious meals during the school day to stay focused in the classroom. Breakfast is provided at no charge to all students and lunch is provided at reasonable prices. It is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to pay for their student’s meals. The information below describes the standard practice the district will follow to maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school meals program while minimizing any undue focus on children who do not have funds.

Meal Applications
At the beginning of each school year, free and reduced meal applications are distributed to OPS families. They are available online, at all schools and in the Nutrition Services Office. A student’s meal status from the prior year is carried over for thirty student days into the next school year. To continue meal benefits, a completed and approved application must be on file. Families may complete an application online for the upcoming school year any time after July 1 (may vary year-to-year). Families may also submit applications any time throughout the school year if they believe they may qualify or if their circumstances have changed (e.g., if the household size goes up, income goes down or if anyone in the household starts receiving SNAP, TANF or other benefits). Links for the online meal application and online payment are located at www.ops.org.

Meal Balances
Parents and/or guardians are encouraged to monitor their child’s meal balance online and keep an adequate amount of funds in the child’s account to pay for their meals. Prepayment is encouraged. Payment may be made online, or at the school with cash or check. District staff will notify parents of low account or negative balances by using various communication channels (e.g., sending reminders home with the child, making phone calls, sending letters home and through email messages). For information on accessing your child’s online account visit: www.schoolcafe.com (you will need your student’s ID).

Elementary Schools:
• A complimentary breakfast is provided to all students.
• Money remaining in a student’s account at the end of the year will be carried forward to the next school year unless contacted by the parent/guardian for a refund or a child leaves the district.
• If a student changes buildings within OPS their meal balance will follow them.
• Nutrition Services staff will notify the parent or guardian when the account has funds remaining for three meals in the account (approximately $4 full price meals or $1.20 for reduced price meals).
• Students must have money in their account or cash to purchase extra milk or a la carte items.
• Communication, by the Nutrition Services Staff or the School Administration, will continue until the account balance is paid in full.
• All negative balances must be paid off by the end of the school year.

Middle and High Schools:
• A complimentary breakfast is provided to all students.
• Money remaining in a student’s account at the end of the year will be carried forward to the next school year unless contacted by the parent/guardian for a refund or a child leaves the district.
• If a student changes buildings within OPS their meal balance will follow them.
• Students will be notified of their balance verbally at the cash register when their account falls below $5.00.
• Students will be provided a ‘Two Meal Safety Net’ when the account reaches zero. This allows parents and guardians to provide the funds to pay the balance owed for future meals.
• Students who have used the ‘Two Meal Safety Net’ and do not have the funds to pay for the current meal will receive a meal which consists of the required meal components. The student will have their choice of a cold sandwich (peanut butter and jelly, sunbutter or cheese), fruit, vegetable and milk. The meal will be charged to the account.
• Students must have money in their account or cash to purchase extra milk or a la carte items.
• Any student who has a negative balance will be able to pay for a current meal when it is received.
• If payment is not submitted, contact will be made to the parent or guardian requesting payment. A meal application may also be sent home.
• All negative balances must be paid off by the end of the school year.

Adults:
• Adults must have money in their account or cash to make a purchase.
• Adults will not be allowed to charge meals or a la carte items.
• Adults may check their account balance as they go through the line or contact the cafeteria manager.

Negative Account Balances
The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when the account balance is low. Additionally, reasonable efforts will be made to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Communication will be coordinated to contact families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges.

Online Meal Accounts
To learn more about how to log in to your child’s meal account online, visit www.schoolcafe.com. You will need your child’s student ID to register.

If you have questions regarding your child’s meal account please contact your child’s school or the OPS Nutrition Services Department at (531) 299-0230.