

CHILD NUTRITION PAYMENT AND CHARGE POLICY

The Quitman School District recognizes that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn. In addition, Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 210.10(a)(1) General Nutrition Requirements states "Schools must provide nutritious and well-balanced meals to all the children they serve." In accordance with this regulation, the Quitman School District will not deny any student access to school lunch. However, by statute, the district's Food and Nutritional Services department is a self-supporting fund that shall not have a negative balance at the close of a fiscal year. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Food and Nutritional Services department and on the district's operating budget. To be fair and equitable and in order to ensure compliance of all who participate in the school meal program, the policy establishes procedures for methods of payment, charge availability and collection methods.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

The Quitman School District (QSD) will accept pre-payment of school meals in the form of cash or check at the register or at the Central Office. Cash or check for a daily meal will also be accepted at the register.

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) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat or meat alternative, fruit, vegetable and milk) and must include a fruit and/or vegetable component. This will result in a negative balance on the student's account until funds are added to the student's account. Under no circumstances will a student with a negative account balance be allowed to purchase a la carte items until the student's account is in good standing. "Good standing" for the purchase of a la carte items is defined as an account with a positive balance.

For Students with Free Lunch Status

The federal school lunch program allows a qualifying student to receive a free school lunch every day. Students are required to take a reimbursable meal. Items sold on an a la carte basis are not part of the USDA program and must be paid for with cash. A la carte items cannot be charged.

For Students with Reduced Price Lunch Status

The federal school lunch program allows a qualifying student to receive a reimbursable meal at the reduced price of \$0.30 at breakfast and \$0.40 at lunch. Students are required to take a reimbursable meal. Items sold on an a la carte basis are not part of the USDA program and must be paid for with cash. A la carte items cannot be charged. Students with reduced price lunch status will be allowed to charge reimbursable meals up to \$4.00 before the collection process begins.

For Students with Paid Lunch Status

Prices for school lunch are set by the Quitman School District in accordance with federal and state regulations. A la carte items cannot be charged but may be purchased with cash. Students with paid lunch status may charge reimbursable meals up to \$10.00 before the collection process begins. The cashier will remind the student that the account needs to be paid.

The Collection Process

Step 1: When the charge amount exceeds the amounts set above, the Food and Nutritional Services Manager or designee will send a letter or text/call to the parent(s)/guardian(s) requesting immediate payment. Contact will be made on a weekly basis at minimum. Free/Reduced Lunch Application Forms will be sent home by student if one is not on file.

Step 2: If the parent(s)/guardian(s) has not made any payments in an effort to reduce the negative balance or fails to bring the student's account in good standing within thirty (30) days, administration will be notified and will have the option to notify appropriate state agencies.

Step 3: If a student's account balance exceeds -\$50.00, the administration may prohibit participation by the student in any future fee-based program (field trips, user-fee based programs, etc.) until or unless the deficit balance is paid in full.

Additional Steps:

If a student's account is not in good standing at the end of the school year, the administration may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law or regulation:

- Delay the participation in extra-curricular activities until or unless the negative or delinquent balance is paid in full.
- Prohibit the student's participation or other students within the student's household from participating in any future fee or charge-based program until or unless the negative or delinquent balance is paid in full.
- Notify appropriate state agencies.

If a **senior's** account is not in good standing as of May 1st, the administration may prohibit the student from participation in senior activities and/or graduation exercises.

Negative Balances

On May 1st or the first day of school in May of each year, the Child Nutrition Office will send the School Office a list of students with negative balances. The School Office will also send notifications to students and parents in regards to the negative balance that must be paid. The Federally Funded Child Nutrition Office is not allowed to carry a debt forward, so at the end of the school year, after all efforts are made, any negative balances will be carried over to the next school year by the School District Office, not the Federally Funded Child Nutrition Office. This will allow parents to be on an extended payment plan while debt is being collected. Collection efforts will continue until student is in good standing. The School Office will notify the Child Nutrition Office when a student's account is back in "good standing". The student will be allowed to purchase A la carte items after that point.

Student Withdrawals and Account Balances

School Secretaries are to notify the Child Nutrition Office or the cafeteria manager when a parent withdraws a student. If the student has a negative balance at the time of withdrawal, the parent will be required to pay the balance of the account. If the parent fails to pay at the

time of withdrawal, attempts to collect the unpaid balance by way of letters, phone calls and notification of appropriate state agencies will occur.

If a student has a positive balance at the time of withdrawal, they may contact the cafeteria manager to make arrangements to receive a refund on the account. If a student or parent fails to contact the cafeteria manager or Child Nutrition Office within 30 days after the student withdraws from QSD, the balance of the account will be placed into an emergency cafeteria account. The emergency account may be used to clear negative account balances of uncollected withdrawn students.

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