



Department of Food Service

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Virginia Department of Education has mandated that all School Nutrition Departments provide information to the parents of students regarding the meal charge policy of each School Division. This letter is to inform you of the meal charge policy for Portsmouth Public Schools.

Elementary Students who do not have money on account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service may be permitted to charge the meal. Middle School and High School Students are not allowed to charge meals.

Notice of low or negative balances in a student's meal account are sent to parents and the school principal. Parents are expected to pay all meal charges in full by the last day of the school year.

If a parent regularly fails to provide meal money or send food to school with the student, and the student does not qualify for free or reduced benefits, the child nutrition director will inform the principal, who will determine the next course of action.

The superintendent ensures that federal child nutrition funds are not used to offset the cost of unpaid meals and that the child nutrition program is reimbursed for bad debt. In order to accomplish those goals, the following procedures are followed:

- At least one written notice is provided to a student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the student being denied reimbursable meals for exceeding the division's charge limit.
- If payment of the negative balance is not received within 10 working days of the maximum charge limit being reached, the debt will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. If the debt is not paid within 90 days of notice being given, it is considered bad debt for the purpose of federal law concerning unpaid meal charges.

Students who cannot pay for a meal or who owe a school debt are not required to do chores or other work to pay for such meals or wear a wristband or hand stamp.

Sincerely,

Jim Gehlhoff,
Coordinator of School Nutrition Services