

710.4 MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with state and federal law, the Washington Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

Payment of Meals

Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches \$0.00 a student may charge no more than five (5) meals to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid. Money may be added to lunch accounts in the following ways: PaySchool, which is online via www.washington.k12.ia.us or bring money to school.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Schools are encouraged to provide a reimbursable meal to students with outstanding meal charge debt. If an alternate meal is provided, the meal must be the same meal presented in the same manner to any student requesting an alternate meal.

Employees may use a charge account for meals. When an account reaches \$0.00, an employee shall not be allowed to charge further meals.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with the student's parent or guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Parents or guardians will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once a negative balance is reached. Parents or guardians will be notified by preferred method of an email on file with the district, or note sent home with the student. Families can sign up to receive low account balance notifications. Negative balances of more than \$50, not paid prior to the last day of the school year will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law. Payment plans may be available by contacting Central Office during business hours. 319-653-6543.

Unpaid Student Meals Account

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

Communication of the Policy

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information was communicated to households and staff will be retained.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent to develop an administrative regulations for implementing this policy.

NOTE: If the district elects to provide alternate meals for students, the alternate meal must contain components available to all students and be provided in the same manner as meals are provided to other students. Additionally, the district is expected to accommodate special dietary needs when a child's disability restricts their diet.

NOTE: The Iowa Department of Education has tools and resources available to help districts with the school nutrition program and meal charge policy implementation and review. Please visit the "[School Meals](#)" section of the Iowa Department of Education's website.

NOTE: School districts must follow appropriate debt collection practices when trying to recover unpaid meal charges.

Legal Reference:	42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 <i>et seq.</i> 7 C.F.R. §§ 210 <i>et seq.</i> U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 46-2016, unpaid meal charges: local meal charge policies (2016). U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016). U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 57-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A (2016). Iowa Code 283A. 281 I.A.C. 58.
Cross Reference:	710.1 School Nutrition Program 710.2 Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility 710.3 Vending Machine