



## **NSLP Program Meal Charge Policy**

Arizona Charter Academy is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on schoolwork, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services are primarily a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced school meals only. The school will provide a regular meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.

### **Meal Charges and Balances**

Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the school and for their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. Payment options include payment in the school's front office, payment at the point of service, over-the-phone payment and online payment. After the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, the student will still be allowed to take a meal. That meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. Unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided permission to the school to withhold a meal. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches \$5.00. Negative balances of more than \$50.00 will be blocked and parents will be notified.

### **Payments**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail at regular intervals during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be emancipated. If parents/guardians have issues with student purchases, they should contact food services for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school's webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.



All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents via the Parent's Portal. The point-of-sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents will receive automated low-balance emails or mailed notices weekly, if applicable. If notices do not result in payment, parents will receive a phone call from food services. If the phone call does not result in payment food services shall turn the account over to the business office.

### **Refunds**

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a parent request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request.

### **Unclaimed Funds**

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within six months. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of Success School District Food Service Program.

### **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

Failure of a parent or guardian to maintain reasonably current accounts may result in student's account being blocked from making further meal charges. The school will contact parents/guardians to let them know that the student's account has been blocked due to nonpayment.

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price lunches for their child.

### **Policy Communications**

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.