



# Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

Austintown Schools Food Services Department

## Purpose

The Austintown Schools Food Services Department provides nourishing meals to our students and helps fuel their learning in the classroom. The department operates as a self-funded entity, like any other business, and unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the Austintown Local Schools.

The intent of this policy is:

- i. To be transparent with our families on the district procedures for handling unpaid meal charges
- ii. To establish policies that are age-appropriate for our students
- iii. To encourage parent/guardian responsibility of meal payments and charges
- iv. To outline the actions the district will take to implement and enforce the policy and collect outstanding debts

## Purchasing & Payments in the Cafeteria

Every student has a meal account created during the enrollment process. Students use their Student ID number to access their account and make purchases in the cafeteria. Purchase restrictions must be arranged with the Food Services Office directly at 330-797-3900 ext. 1315.

Money can be applied to a student's account electronically at [LINQConnect.com](http://LINQConnect.com). Cash or check may be sent in an envelope, marked with the student's name and ID number, to your student's cafeteria (payable to the school's cafeteria, for example: AES Cafeteria). Payments are applied to negative meal debt first, if applicable, and any additional funds will remain as a positive balance for future purchases.

## Charging Meals (Negative Account Balances)

Meal charges in the cafeteria are to be made in emergency situations when a student has forgotten their lunch or money. Only complete meals can be charged; extras cannot be charged. Extras purchases are prohibited when an account has a negative balance. Charging meals is like using a credit card. Meals can be charged to a meal account with payment made at a later time. Charging occurs when a student does not have enough money in their meal account to cover a purchase, causing a negative account balance (or meal debt).

Parents are responsible for paying all meal debt on their student's meal account. Keep in mind that a student's meal account balance can fluctuate multiple times each day due to payments made and/or meal and a la carte purchases.

## Charge Limits

The charge limit varies by building and meal status. The chart below reflects the equivalent of 5 breakfast meals and 5 lunch meals, per meal status, per building. This equates to 1 full week of meals. Subject to meal price changes.

Meal Prices					Negative Charge Limit	
School	Full Pay Lunch	Full Pay Breakfast	Reduced Lunch	Reduced Breakfast	Full Pay Limit	Reduced Limit
FHS	\$3.25	\$2.00	\$0.40	\$0.30	- \$26.25	- \$3.50
AMS	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$0.40	\$0.30	- \$25.00	- \$3.50
AIS	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$0.40	\$0.30	- \$25.00	- \$3.50
AES	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$0.40	\$0.30	- \$25.00	- \$3.50

## Alternate Entree

Once the charge limit has been reached an alternate entree will be served. Alternate entrees are nutritionally equivalent to menu entrees, for example: whole grain cereal or oatmeal at breakfast and turkey (or ham) and cheese sandwich at lunch. Students may select all other meal components (fruit, vegetable, milk). Meals with alternate entrees are charged at the normal rate to the student's meal account. Food allergies will be accommodated.

**Full Pay and Reduced Status Students**

**Grades K-8:** Alternate entrees are served and charged to the meal account

**Grades 9-12:** No meals served once the charge limit is exceeded  
(negative \$26.25 for Full Pay / negative \$3.50 for Reduced)

**Free Status Students**

Eligibility for free meal benefits starts the day an application is approved in our system. Until that time, parents are responsible for providing lunch money or a packed lunch and for paying back any meal debt accumulated prior to approval. The debt will remain on the account until the parent pays it off in full. To apply for free or reduced-price meals visit [LINQConnect.com](http://LINQConnect.com).

**Notification and Collection of Meal Debt**

Parents are responsible for their student’s meal account. We encourage parents to use [LINQConnect.com](http://LINQConnect.com) to view purchase history and set low balance email alerts.

The Food Services Office frequently attempts to notify families of negative meal account balances. We alternate notification methods weekly and track and archive reports of all notifications sent to households.

<b>Notification Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Threshold</b>
Postal Mail	Biweekly	Accounts owing \$3.50 or more (negative \$3.50)
One Call Now	Biweekly	All negative account balances
Email	Weekly	All negative account balances
Personal Phone Call	As needed	As needed
Principal Involvement/Meeting	As needed	As needed

Meal debt is a school fee that remains and accumulates with the student throughout their enrollment at Austintown Schools. Meal debt must be paid before withdrawing or graduating. As the district continues to make debt collection efforts, certain privileges may be revoked at the district and building principal’s discretion, such as:

1. Report cards and transcripts held
2. Non-academic field trip privileges held
3. Fun day privileges held
4. Admission into Homecoming/Prom prohibited
5. Limiting participation in seasonal sports

NOTE: This policy is exclusive to meal debt in the cafeteria and does not include academic school fees.

**For questions contact:  
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