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September 2017,

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In response to a US Department of Agriculture requirement, the The Hopewell Valley Board of Education developed and approved a policy related to student unpaid meal charges.

Please review the attached policy.

Robert Colavita
Business Administrator/Board Secretary



Book	Policies
Section	8000 Series: Operations
Title	Unpaid Meal Charges/Outstanding Food Service Charges
Number	8550
Status	Active
Adopted	August 21, 2017

8550 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES/OUTSTANDING FOOD SERVICE CHARGES

The Board of Education understands a student may forget to bring breakfast or lunch, as applicable, or money to purchase breakfast or lunch to school on a school day. When this happens, the food service program will provide the student with breakfast or lunch, with an expectation payment will be made the next school day or shortly thereafter. However, there may be circumstances when payment is not made and a student's food service account is in arrears. The school district will manage a student's food service account that is in arrears in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 and this Policy.

We recognize a family may experience hardships throughout the year. Free/reduced lunch applications are available and can be accepted throughout the school year. The application can be obtained from each school or the Business Office. Further, the district will work with families through our school counseling office and/or administration to ascertain the circumstances behind the unavailability of funds in an effort to avoid placing the student in an embarrassing situation.

For students whose food service account balances are in the negative, emails will be sent weekly to parents as a reminder to replenish and bring the account up to date.

In the event a student's food service account is in arrears in excess of \$50.00 or more, the student will continue to receive lunch or breakfast and their account will be charged accordingly. The Principal or designee shall contact the student's parent to provide notice of the amount in arrears and shall provide the parent a period of ten school days to pay in full or make arrangements with the district.

If the student's breakfast or lunch bill is in arrears, but the student has the money to purchase breakfast or lunch, the student will be provided breakfast or lunch and the food service program will not use the student's money to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal. The food service program will prevent the overt identification of children through the method of payment used to purchase a meal and whose breakfast or lunch bills in arrears.

If the student's parent does not make full payment by the end of the ten school days or made arrangements with the district, the Principal or designee shall again contact the student's parent via certified letter to provide a second notice that their child's food service account is in arrears.

If payment in full is not made within seven calendar days from the date of the second notice, student purchases will be restricted. The student will be provided only a basic lunch that will contain the essentials in balanced nutritional selections as prescribed by the Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture beginning the eighth calendar day from the date of the second notice. The parent will be requested to meet with the Principal or designee to discuss and resolve the matter.

In those instances where the parent has not responded to inquiries and/or made no attempt to resolve the lunch account issues with the district and owes the district \$100.00 or more due to outstanding food service charges, students will not be permitted to participate in the following until the balance is paid:

- Extracurricular sports

- Activities or programs
- Clubs
- Parking privileges
- Prom (Junior/Senior)
- Senior Option
- Graduation ceremony
- Any and others as determined by the administration

A parent's refusal to meet or take other steps to resolve the matter may be indicative of more serious issues in the family or household. In these situations, the Principal or designee shall consult with and seek necessary services from both the County Board of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency, as appropriate.

When a parent's routine failure to provide breakfast or lunch is reasonably suspected to be indicative of child abuse or neglect, the Principal or designee shall immediately report such suspicion to the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency as required in N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10. Such reporting shall not be delayed to accommodate a parent's meeting with the Principal or designee.

In accordance with the provisions of the United States Department of Agriculture, this Policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school or school district during the school year. The school district may post this Policy on the school or school district's website provided there is a method in place to ensure this Policy reaches all households, particularly those households without access to a computer or the Internet.

This Policy shall also be provided to all school and food service staff responsible for the enforcement of this Policy, including school administrators to ensure this Policy is supported.

The food service program will comply with all meal charge policy requirements of the United States and New Jersey Department of Agriculture and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.

N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21

Adopted: August 21, 2017