

NTCA School Meal Account Charges and Collections Policy for 2018-2019

The New Testament Christian Academy recognizes the important link between proper nutrition and academic success. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent procedure for charging meals when students do not have money to pay, preventing meal charges, and ensuring eligible children are certified for free and reduced-price school meals. To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student. The goal is to treat all students with dignity regardless of meal account and status. Families will be notified of the school Meal Account Charge Policy in writing before the school year begins and with each new transfer student. This policy will also be posted on the school website.

Charging meals:

Because hunger is an impediment to learning, no child shall be denied a school meal because of an inability to pay. Children will be served a meal that meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition standards for school meals.

Alternatives:

- Students with a negative balance will be permitted to get a meal without meal substitution.
- Only students who have been approved under the eligibility guidelines of the Nation School Lunch program are entitled to a free or reduced price meal. All non-eligible students will be charged for their meal.
- Any student who has a negative balance will be able to pay for a current reimbursable meal when it is received.

Hand stamps, stickers, or any other means of overt identification of children with unpaid meal debt in the cafeteria or the classroom are prohibited. Additionally, children with unpaid meal debt shall not be required to work off their debt, including, but not limited to, wiping down tables or cleaning the cafeteria.

Preventing meal charges:

- Encourage parents and/or guardians to monitor their child's meal balance online (ezparentcenter.com) and keep an adequate amount of funds in their child's account to pay for their meals.
- Prepayment is encouraged. Payment should be made at the same time that the school lunch menu is returned to the school office. Payment can be made on line, or at the school with cash or check made payable to NTCA. For information on accessing your child's online account visit www.ezparentcenter.com or contact Mrs. Hunter at 414-365-1677.

- Provide all households with monthly lunch menus at the start of each month and include instructions for completing online school meal purchases.

To ensure that households are aware of negative account balances and the potential to accrue meal debt, the school secretary will:

- Send out weekly balance notices prior to students needing to charge meals;
- Notify and/or work with the director and/or teachers to understand the student and parent's situation and if a school meal application is needed;
- Parents/guardians of children with negative balances are notified by email that a negative balance exists. Parent/guardians of elementary students will receive this regularly.

Collecting unpaid meal debt: or Collection procedures for food debts

Communication regarding unpaid meal debt shall be directed at parents or guardians.

- Prior to contacting households regarding unpaid meal debt, the school director shall ensure that the student is not participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or any other federal programs, which would confer categorical eligibility for free school meals, or is not homeless, migrant, or in foster care, and would allow them to be certified without an application.
- Any household with a negative school lunch account balance shall be contacted immediately by school secretary by email, phone, or letter home to provide information on how to apply for free or reduced-price school meal or to add funds to the school account.
- For households that cannot afford to pay their school meal charges, the Business Manager will work with them to establish a payment plan. Households that are subsequently certified for free school meals at a point later in the school year shall not be required to repay school meal debt accrued prior to the certification date of the application. Households that are subsequently certified for reduced price school meals prior meal debt will be calculated at the reduced-price rate for which repayment will be required for any school meal debt accrued prior to the certification date of the application.

Carry-over unpaid meal debt:

- All positive/negative balances at the end of the school year will carry over to the next school year.
- Negative balances must be cleared up before the end of the school year but notices will continue until the debt has been paid.
- Graduating students must clear all debt prior to final promotion ceremony. A student may not participate in the promotion ceremony unless all obligations are paid in full.
- As an option, the school may consider establishing long-term payment plans for households struggling to pay back a negative balance. Those unpaid meal charges may

be carried over at the end of the school year (i.e., beyond June 30) as a delinquent debt and collection efforts may continue into the new school year. This allows the school (SFA) to work with individual families to establish longer repayment plans and to continue pursuing collection efforts if/when children change schools within the city or move to a new school outside the city. When the school business manager determines further collection efforts for delinquent debt are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as "bad debt.

- Graduating students will have three options regarding positive balances.
 - They may choose to receive a refund if their balance is \$5.00 or above.
 - They may choose to transfer the balance of their account to a sibling attending NTCA School.
 - They may donate the balance for the benefit of another student. Notices will be sent out in May.

The school will encourage families to apply for the national free and reduced program by announcing it, sending home applications and information to all families and having the link on the website.