

Harmony Public Schools Meal Charge Procedures

Guide for Schools

Summary of the Policy

Each student has a meal account onto which a parent/guardian may deposit money. The student may purchase breakfast/lunch meals or a la carte milk from this account. Money may be deposited in the account by online payments or by check/money order at the school's front office.

In the event the account balance reaches \$0, the student will be allowed to charge up to the negative balance limit established by the district. Once the debt balance limit is reached, the student will be provided with an alternate meal. The breakfast alternate meal will consist of cereal, fruit of the day, and choice of milk. The lunch alternate meal will consist of a sandwich, vegetable of the day, and choice of milk. The student will be provided the alternate meal until the account reflects a positive balance or until a meal application is submitted and approved for free meals.

Note that a student who later submits a meal application and is approved for reduced meals will still need to pay down the negative balance before receiving a reimbursable meal (see clarification below). Students who accumulate a negative balance and later submit an application and are approved for free meals begin receiving a reimbursable meal immediately. However, the household is still responsible for the negative balance.

Application Approval with Account Balances

If a household completes an application and is determined to be of free eligibility, the students begin receiving a reimbursable meal immediately. The household is still responsible for paying off the balance, and the school will work with them to set up a payment plan. Free students should never receive an alternate meal, regardless of meal account balance.

If a household completes an application and is determined to be of reduced eligibility, the household should put enough funds on the account to bring the balance back to positive. The student may then receive a reimbursable meal for the charge of \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch. Students whose balance again exceeds the district limit will be provided with an alternate meal.

Communication with parents

1. The charge policy will be clearly posted on the website of each school. Please upload the Letter to Parents (in pdf format) to the link, "Meal Charges"
2. A summary of the Meal Charge Policy will be published in the school's weekly newsletter 4 times per year according to the schedule below:
 - August: Last Wednesday of the month
 - October: Last Wednesday of the month
 - January: First Wednesday after returning from Winter Holiday
 - March: The Wednesday after returning from Spring Break

TEXT TO INCLUDE IN WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER TO PARENTS:

Nutritious meals are available daily for a price of [breakfast price] for breakfast, \$3.00 for lunch, and \$0.50 for a la carte milk. Each student is provide a lunch account onto which money may be deposited. Households are also encouraged to log in to their child's account (using the parent password), go to the "Lunch" tab, and click on ONLINE LUNCH APPLICATION to apply for free or reduced price meals. If you need the parent password reset, please call the school and ask to speak with the Lunch Clerk.

Should a student's meal account balance fall below \$0, he/she will be allowed to charge up to $-\$[\text{district limit}]$. Once the negative meal account balance limit is reached, the student will receive an alternate meal. Alternate meals consist of cereal, fruit, and milk for breakfast; and for lunch, a sandwich, vegetable, and milk. If a student is later approved for free meals, they will begin receiving meals immediately. However, the household is still responsible for paying the negative account balance. For more information regarding the meal charge policy, please visit our website at: [school web address], and click on the "Meal Charges" link.

3. The Lunch Clerk at each school will notify the household by mail/email/phone call/text according to the schedule below. Remember to keep documentation of communication with the parent/guardian.
 - When child's account balance is \$3
 - Communicate via phone call, text, or email. Document communication.
 - When child's account balance is \$0
 - Communicate via phone call, text, or email. Document communication.
 - When child's account balance is $-\$6$
 - Send the Low Balance Letter via postal mail including a paper application.
 - When child's account balance is $-\$15$
 - Communicate via phone call, text, or email. Document communication.
 - Continuing negative balances
 - Send a school messenger daily ONLY to the households who have negative balances (not to the entire school).

Parents are responsible for paying the negative balance even if they are later approved for free or reduced meals. Do not provide an alternate meal to a child who has a negative balance, but is approved for free meals.

Issuing Alternate Meals

Schools may determine what method of distribution works best for their campus. Ideas for distribution include packing the alternate meal in a lunch sack and delivering to the classroom, appearing as if a parent brought it from home. Another idea is for the Lunch Clerk to email the teachers in the morning with the list of students who need to see the Lunch Clerk before getting in line. Find the system that works best to identify the students needing an alternate meal PRIOR TO meal service.

DO NOT take a child's lunch tray and throw in the trash once they have come through the serving line.

Allow them to receive the meal, but later confidentially inform the child that they need to see the Lunch Clerk prior to going through the serving line to receive an alternate meal. There should be no communication about negative meal balances between the school and the student. All communication should be with the parent/guardian.

Counting Alternate Meals

- Alternate meals will be documented as follows: have one paper each day with the date, names of students who receive an alternate meal, and initials of Lunch Clerk. File this document along with the daily transaction report.
 - Alternate meals provided to students of "paid" eligibility MAY be reimbursed
 - Alternate meals provided to students of "reduced" eligibility MAY NOT be reimbursed.

Student Pricing

- There will be no charge to the student for an alternate meal.

Alternate Meal Ordering & Billing

- **Northwest Catering (Houston, SST-San Antonio, SST-Discovery)**
 - Breakfast: whole grain cereal, fruit of the day, choice of milk = \$1.25
 - Billed just for meals served.
 - Schools may request more cereal by using the NWC Control Page
 - Breakfast (UNIVERSAL FREE): If you are a school serving Universal Free Breakfast, no student receives an alternate meal at breakfast.
 - Lunch: sun butter sandwich, vegetable of the day, choice of milk = \$1.75
 - Orders for sandwiches will be placed 72 hours in advance.
 - Billed for meals served.
 - Extra sandwiches ordered but not used for alternate meal (and thrown away after 2-3 days) will be billed at the rate of \$ 1.50 each.

- **Revolution Foods (Austin, Waco, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio, SST-Corpus Christi)**
 - Breakfast: whole grain cereal, fruit of the day, choice of milk = \$1.50
 - Order shelf stable cereal in advance (by Monday at 5:00 for delivery the following Monday)
 - Pay for alternate meals up front.
 - Issue as needed. Order more cereal when inventory is low.
 - Breakfast (UNIVERSAL FREE): If you are a school serving Universal Free Breakfast, no student receives an alternate meal at breakfast.
 - Lunch: sun butter sandwich, vegetable of the day, choice of milk = \$2.35
 - Order sandwiches for delivery twice per week
 - By Monday at 5:00 for delivery the following Monday & Wednesday
 - Billed in advance for alternate meals at time of sandwich order.

- **Preferred Meals (Laredo)**
 - Breakfast: whole grain cereal, fruit of the day, choice of milk = \$1.30
 - Lunch: cheese sandwich, vegetable of the day, choice of milk = \$2.05

- **The Basil Garden (El Paso)**
 - TBD

- **Ricardo's (Brownsville)**
 - Breakfast: Universal Free, so no alternate meals provided
 - Lunch: TBD

- **Great Western (Odessa)**
 - Breakfast: whole grain cereal, fruit of the day, choice of milk = \$1.50
 - Order cereal needed at least 72 hours in advance
 - Meals will be billed at time of order
 - Lunch: sandwich, vegetable of the day, choice of milk = \$2.25
 - Order sandwiches at least 72 hours in advance
 - Meals will be billed at time of order
 - Discard sandwiches after 2-3 days

Payment

- Due to changes in TDA regulations, these alternate meals MAY be paid for out of the Child Nutrition fund (240 account).