

Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan

**Approved by the Board of Education July 2, 2018
Revised August 1, 2018**

ELMONT UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan
June, 2018

The goal of the Elmont Union Free School District (the “District”) is to ensure that students are provided access to nutritious meals each school day and ensure that a student whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid balances place a financial strain on the Child Nutrition Program. The purpose of this plan is to ensure compliance with federal requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this plan is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Elmont Union Free School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this plan pertain to regular reimbursable school breakfast and lunch meals only.

The following plan components are designed to ensure compliance with the law:

A. Student Meal of Choice

1. The District shall provide all students, upon request, any reimbursable meal offered on the school day in session regardless of any balance owed on a student’s meal account.
2. Parents/guardians may notify the food service staff in writing to be placed on the point of sale (POS) system, alerting the cashier of a request for “no charging/offering” of meals. Upon receipt of this notification, charges which have been incurred prior to this notification will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
3. The Elmont Union Free School District only allows charging of reimbursable meals. A-la-carte items cannot be purchased on an account with an outstanding balance. Charging is prohibited for a-la-carte and adult meals.

B. Staff Training

1. All food service staff shall receive training at the start of each school year regarding the Districts Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan, related procedures.
2. The School Meals Manager shall access appropriate written documents, videos and other training materials if offered by the Child Nutrition Program of the New York State Education Department or State professional organizations.
3. The School Meals Manager shall make random observations of students at each school building to ensure compliance with the District's Plan at least twice per fiscal year.
4. All parents and guardians shall be informed of eligibility of free and reduced meals at the start of the school year in accordance with procedures set forth by the New York State Education Department. Application information will be posted on the District's website at www.elmontschools.org, included in new registration packets and be available through the students designated school building, Administrative building and the registrar's office.

C. Communication Procedures to Parents

1. Information on accessing the My School Bucks system to prepay meals is available on the District's website at www.elmontschools.org. Funds should be maintained on accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day.
2. Parents and guardians accessing the district-wide payment system (My School Bucks) will receive unpaid balance alerts by email if requested.
3. Parents and guardians, whether or not accessing the district-wide payment system, shall receive notices from the school office or the School Meals Office regarding unpaid balances. Negative balance letters will be forwarded via student book bag distribution and USPS from the School Meals Office to the parent or guardian.
4. The School Meals Manager may confer with the building principal, social worker, or other authorized staff for assistance in contacting the parent or guardian.

5. Remaining funds at the end of the year in a student's meal account will automatically be carried over to the next year unless a written request for refund is received by the School Meals Manager.
6. Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students require a written or emailed request to the School Meals Office/Manager. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account by contacting the School Meals office or submitting a written request.
7. Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Elmont Union Free School District Food Service Program.

D. Communication Procedures to Support Free & Reduced Meal Eligible Families

1. In the event a parent or guardian owes more than \$25 for meals charged by a student, the District shall:
 - a. Make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals.
 - b. Make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application.
 - c. Offer any other assistance that is appropriate to obtain information that may have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal.
2. The School Meals Manager shall determine eligible families through the Direct Certification Process (DC download through the POS system) at least three times during the school year. The School Meals Manager shall search the site monthly for newly eligible students.
3. All new students, previously eligible students, or students identified as needy by authorized school staff will be manually searched on the New York State Education Department website by the School Meals Manager to determine eligibility. If the student is determined to be eligible, the parent or guardian will be notified by the Food Service Office.
4. Before the annual thirty-day grace period for free and reduced meals is exhausted, the Food Service Office will contact the parent or guardian by forwarding a new application for free and reduced meals via student book bag distribution. The Food Service Office will offer assistance with completion of the application and as necessary, coordinate with the building principal, social worker, or other authorized staff to provide the assistance.

E. Procedures Designed to Decrease Student Distress or Embarrassment

1. No District staff shall publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means.
2. No District staff shall require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals.
3. No District staff shall require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals.
4. No District staff shall take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. The District may only attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector, as defined in section eight hundred three of the federal Consumer Credit Protection Act, 5 U.S.C. Sec. 1692a.
5. School food service staff shall receive training to:
 - a. Access accounts by student identification numbers rather than names in the first instance.
 - b. Ensure that the student account screen can only be viewed by the cashier.
 - c. Make reference to accounts as generic accounts so that the status of the account is not revealed.
 - d. Notify the owner of the account that inquiry of the account is only for the owner.
 - e. Maintain confidentiality of student meal account information between the cashier and the student.
 - f. Not reveal account balances unless upon request of the student.

F. Procedures to Handle Unpaid Meal Charges

1. Every two weeks, the School Meals Manager will review account balances in the Point of Sale system to identify unpaid balances. Upon review, unpaid accounts totaling greater than \$25 will require the manager to forward a negative balance to the parent or guardian via distribution of the designated school personnel.
2. If contact is unsuccessful, the School Lunch Manager may contact the building principal, social worker or authorized personnel for assistance.
3. Nothing in this section is intended to allow for unlimited accrual of debt on school food service accounts.

4. The District is prohibited from charging interest or fees on unpaid balances at any time. Convenience fees charged to parents who pay for meals by credit card through MySchoolBucks.com are allowable.

G. Procedures to Enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

1. The District shall follow the procedures to enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program set forth by the New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Unit.
2. Such procedures shall include, at the beginning of the school year, the District mailing a free, printed meal application to every household and accessibility through the District website at www.elmontschools.org and available at the student's school.
3. Completed applications from the parents or guardians should be provided to the building designated personnel, who will forward to the School Meals Office. Parents or guardians who are on the Statewide Direct Certification System (DCMP) are automatically downloaded and do not need to submit a paper application. Parents or guardians submitting a certification letter from the Department of Social Services stating eligibility also do not need to submit a paper application.
4. The School Meals Manager will review the applications and determine eligibility according to the New York State Education guidelines, including direct certification and Department of Social Services certification for qualified individuals.
5. The School Meals office will notify parents and guardians by letter if their children qualify or do not qualify for free and reduced meals.

H. Procedures for Students Not Submitting Free and Reduced Meal Applications

1. Each student enrolled in the free and reduced meal program in the previous year is automatically granted a thirty school day grace period at the start of the school year for the parent or guardian to submit a new application. Should an application be received and processed prior to the end of the thirty school day grace period the new eligibility determination will take effect.
2. One week prior to the expiration of the thirty school day grace period, contact will be made to the parent or guardian reminding him or her that a completed application has not been received.
3. The School Meals Manager will review the list of uncompleted applications to determine if any student should qualify for free meals as per the Statewide Direct Certification System (DCMP).

I. Coordination with School Liaisons for Homeless, Foster and Migrant Students

1. On an annual basis at the organizational meeting, the Board of Education will appoint a school liaison for homeless, foster and migrant students in accordance with policy #5070, Homeless Children.
2. The liaison will contact the School Meals Manager to provide written notice that a student is designated as homeless, foster, or migrant and qualifies for free meals on an immediate basis.
3. The School Meals Manager will update the Point of Sale System to designate the student for free meals and maintain a listing for audit purposes.

J. Who to Contact Regarding the Plan

1. The School Meals Manager may be contacted regarding implementation of the plan at phone number 516-326-5500, ext. 42025 or by contacting him/her by email, which is available at <https://www.elmontschools.org/domain/59> .

References:

Food Service Management	Policy #5251
Dignity for All Students Act	Policy #5301
Wellness Policy on Physical Activity and Nutrition	Policy #8040