

535P UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through New Discoveries Montessori Academy's nutrition program and that New Discoveries Montessori Academy employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students/families have use of a meal account. When the balance becomes low, a notification is sent home. Parents can make a payment in the school office or online.
- B. If New Discoveries Montessori Academy receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- C. Siblings share the same monetary account.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. New Discoveries Montessori Academy will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of a low balance once the balance reaches \$6. Families will be notified by email, text or letter.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program. A meal will not be taken away from a student with an overdrawn account. Students will receive a fully reimbursable meal in this instance as well, not a reduced meal or a substitution.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. New Discoveries Montessori Academy will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. New Discoveries Montessori Academy will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts

are being made to collect it.

- C. Negative balances not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the Board appointed administrator or the Board appointed administrator's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. New Discoveries Montessori Academy may not enlist the assistance of non New Discoveries Montessori Academy employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. New Discoveries Montessori Academy may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in any end of the year activities due to unpaid meal charges.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer to New Discoveries Montessori Academy, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all New Discoveries Montessori Academy employees who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. New Discoveries Montessori Academy may post the policy on the New Discoveries Montessori Academy's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4
42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act) 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016) USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (*Letter to Ricker*)