

## **Jersey Shore Area School District**

### **Approved Procedure for Food Service Charges and Negative Balances**

Adopted: September 14, 2015

Updated: November 7, 2016

#### **Rationale:**

The purpose of developing approved procedures is to clarify for everyone involved (parents, students, administrators, food service employees) the procedure to address and resolve charging and negative balance issues.

We know for a fact that children need to eat nutritious meals while at school – it is essential to their learning and their wellbeing.

We know for a fact that some families struggle with finances and with funding their children's school meals.

These two facts often conflict and result in children acquiring significant negative balances in their cafeteria accounts, resulting in thousands of dollars of unpaid accounts every year.

We of course want all our students to eat breakfast and lunch, and we want to allow students to choose their own meals from the choices available. As a school district we also have financial responsibilities to all of our parents and all of our taxpayers who will end up funding those large unpaid accounts.

In the attempt to address these conflicting concerns, we have instituted a sequence of actions/consequence that will occur when negative balances are incurred:

**Special Note – Senior High School.** Students are not allowed to charge over \$5.00 total.

#### **Low balances and negative balances less than \$10:**

Verbal: All cashiers may tell the child what their balance is and that they need to bring in some money.

Written: Elementary cashiers may print a low balance/negative memo and give them to the classroom teacher to send home with the child. Secondary cashiers may hand write a low balance/negative balance memo and give it to the child at the time they go through the line.

#### **Negative balances over \$10 but less than \$20:**

An automated Parent Link phone call will be made to those parents whose child has a negative balance of over \$10 at the end of the week, requesting that funds be sent in to school with the child, funds be added electronically via [myschoolbucks.com](http://myschoolbucks.com), and/or an application be submitted for free or reduced meals.

These weekly automated phone calls will continue as long as the balance remains over negative \$10.

#### **Negative balances over \$20:**

At this point the building principal becomes involved and contacts the parent by phone in the attempt to resolve the problem.

Parents acquiring large balances and/or having balances carrying forward from the prior year, will be offered some flexibility by the principal to develop a payment plan and/or partial forgiveness of prior

debt if there is a good faith effort to address the debt. This may include completing a *Free and Reduced* application.

**Negative balances over \$40:**

At this point, after all of the above procedures have been unproductive, the district may initiate home visits from the Lycoming/Clinton Joinder School-based Outreach Worker to personally address the problem. The worker's findings will include a recommendation for the district's course of action.

**Negative balances over \$100:**

After all other attempts at collecting the debt have been ineffective, the district may choose to send a certified letter home to the parents. This letter will detail the district's intent to undertake legal actions against the parents.

Turning a student's debt over to the court system is something we hope to avoid. But in fairness to all the other taxpayers of the district who will ultimately end up paying these costs, we realize we must take this action if all of our other attempts have been ignored.

All parents can create an account at [myschoolbucks.com](https://myschoolbucks.com) so that they can always see the balances in their child's account and how they are spending their money. This website can also be used to directly fund the student's account.

Free and reduced applications are always available to be completed at any time during the school year, either a paper application or online at [paschoolmeals.com](https://paschoolmeals.com).