

Bridge Elementary Meal Charges Procedure - Reviewed August 2020

A. Purpose and Background

- 1) The National School Lunch Program ("NSLP") and National School Breakfast Program ("NSBP") are programs that Bridge Elementary ("BRIDGE ELEMENTARY" or the "School") offers.
- 2) The purpose of this procedure is to explain how BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will notify parents/guardians about: money owed for student meals; the School's procedures for providing meals if students' accounts are delinquent; and to assure and remind parents and School employees that students will never be confronted or embarrassed about money owed for school meals.

B. Information Provided to Parents

- 1) Prior to or at the beginning of each school year, parents shall receive information from BRIDGE ELEMENTARY regarding;
 - a) School meals;
 - b) Prices for the meals;
 - c) How parents may provide payment for meals; and
 - d) The NSLP and NSBP and how students may qualify for reduced-price or free meals under the programs, including an application for free or reduced-price meals.
- 2) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY shall provide the information described above as follows:
 - a) Information will be provided to BRIDGE ELEMENTARY students and families regarding school meals, prices, payments and how to qualify and apply for free and reduced school meals through the following means: School newsletter at the beginning of the school year, printed and available at Back-to-School Night and given to all students on the 1st day of school. It will also be printed and available in the School office beginning at Back-to-School Night and throughout the school year. It will also be posted on the BRIDGE ELEMENTARY Child Nutrition Director's blog found on the School's website.
 - b) During Back-to-School Night BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will provide applications for free/reduced-price meals to parents, both by providing printed copies and by providing access to a computer to fill out an electronic application online. BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will also have a computer set up during parent teacher conferences for the purpose of filling out an electronic application online. The application is accepted year-round and available in a variety of languages at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/schoolmeals/family-friendly-application-translations>. The School will provide paper applications for parents who do not have access to online forms.
- 3) Prior to or at the beginning of each school year, and upon a student transferring to the School during the school year, BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will provide to the parent of each student a written copy of this procedure by having the newsletter which lists the information above in section 1 available at the front office year-round for parents to access. This procedure will also be posted on the School's website at www.bridgecharter.org, under the lunch tab section. Students, parents, and the School community were involved in developing these communication procedures.
- 4) If a parent or family qualifies for SNAP, FEP, FRRIP, or Medicaid and has not received a qualification for free or reduced-price lunch letter before school starts, the parent should contact the School food service director at chefdave@bridgecharter.org. Parents should also

contact the School food service director for questions about the NSLP or NSBP or for assistance with applying for free or reduced-price school meals.

C. Payments and School Verification

- 1) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY must verify at some point in each student's meal service that the meal is reimbursable or non-reimbursable.
- 2) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will credit meal payments from parents to the student's account within 48 hours, working with banking holidays and schedules. This assures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts as soon as possible before students are selecting school meals.
- 3) If a student/family qualifies for free meals, no payments are due.
- 4) If a family qualifies for reduced-price meals, the school will charge no more than \$.30 for breakfast and \$.40 for lunch.
- 5) Parent payment options for student meals may include:
 - a) Parents may make online payments, using debit or credit cards, for one or all of their students, allocating the funds to individual student's accounts. There may be additional fees for making payments by credit card through the School website. To make an online payment through the School website, parents must click on the lunch tab and go to the link for instant payments. A third party handles all online payments; and
 - b) Parents may make payments to the School by mail or hand delivery. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited (student's name and amount, if several students attend the school). BRIDGE ELEMENTARY also accepts payments by check and/or cash at the School.

D. Identification of Delinquent Accounts

- 1) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will identify accounts weekly and notify parents by email of negative balances. BRIDGE ELEMENTARY may ask students to take notifications addressed to the parent home with them; however, the School will not tell students to "remind" their parents to send money to the School. It is the parents' responsibility to pay the student's account. Asking students to remind parents is inappropriate.
- 2) The School may use any of the following options (or other reasonable options) for student meals if a student's meal account is inadequate:
 - a) Student may bring a sack meal from home; or
 - b) School may continue to provide a regular meal to students and notify parents that the School will use collection efforts to pay for meals. The School shall maintain documentation of parent notice.

E. Delinquent Balances and Other Procedures

- 1) We will notify parents of students with delinquent balances in their school lunch accounts by such methods as:
 - a) Weekly e-mail on accounts from negative \$.01-\$19.99;
 - b) Phone Call from negative \$20.00 to \$50.00; and
 - c) Account turned over to collections negative \$50.01 and above.
 - d) If no payment is received, the account will be turned over to a collection agency when the student's account becomes negative \$50. (No federal funds may be used for the collection of funds). BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will notify parents at least annually concerning their procedures for the collection of past-due accounts.
- 2) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY may complete an application for free/reduced-price meals on behalf of the parents, if School personnel have knowledge of the parents' financial circumstances

and parents give permission. The School will notify parents that an application has been completed on their behalf ("Eligibility Manual for School Meals," July, 2015, pg. 45).

- 3) If a student repeatedly has no money in the student's school lunch account and no student meals are provided from home, School officials will consider the circumstances in the home (e.g., potential abuse or neglect, homelessness, etc.) and may contact the School's social worker and/or Child Protective Services.
- 4) BRIDGE ELEMENTARY will use collection agencies to collect on delinquent accounts.

F. Faculty/Staff/Patrons

- 1) As a Child Nutrition Program, our responsibility is to the students of BRIDGE ELEMENTARY. We love when parents, grandparents, older siblings, Aunt, Uncles, Family Members, Teachers, Aides, Administration and any visitors come to have lunch with our students and in our school. Parents and guests may purchase lunch using their student's accounts if there are funds in the account to cover the meals. When any other account besides student accounts hit a zero balance (\$0.00), meals may be denied until funds or a receipt for funds being deposited into the account that day is presented to the point of sale person.
- 2) The School will annually provide a copy of this procedure to all School personnel who are responsible for or involved in:
 - a) Collecting payment for meals at the time of meal service;
 - b) Notifying parents of delinquent accounts;
 - c) Collection efforts for delinquent accounts;
 - d) Distributing this procedure and other information about the NSLP and NSBP; and
 - e) Enforcing any aspect of this procedure.

G. Review of Procedures

- 1) The School will review this procedure annually and revise it as the School deems necessary.