

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

Note: Districts that provide breakfast and/or lunch free of charge to all students (i.e., "universal meal service") at one or more schools pursuant to 42 USC 1759a or Education Code 49550.5 should revise the following administrative regulation accordingly. Also see BP/AR 3553 - Free and Reduced Price Meals.

**Payments for Meals**

Note: State and federal law (Education Code 49550, 49557; 42 USC 1758, 1773; 7 CFR 245.8) require that all students eligible for free and reduced-price meals receive a reimbursable meal during each school day, which must be the same meal choice offered to noneligible students; see BP/AR 3553 - Free and Reduced Price Meals. Districts therefore cannot serve an alternate meal (i.e., a meal that is different than the day's advertised meal) to a student eligible for reduced-price meals who does not have the ability to pay or who fails to provide a meal ticket or other medium of exchange on a given day.

In addition to providing meals at no cost to students who are eligible, the district may offer meals at no cost to students who qualify for reduced-price benefits. Districts that choose to eliminate reduced-price meal charges may still claim the meals at the reduced-price rate, but the cost difference between the reduced-price meal and the no-cost meal must be covered by the district's cafeteria fund. For more information, see the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Memorandum SP 17-2014.

The following section includes recommendations of the California Department of Education's (CDE)'s Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin and the USDA's "School Meals - FAQs" on the USDA's web site and may be revised to reflect district practice.

With the exception of students who are eligible to receive meals at no cost, students may pay on a per-meal basis or may submit payments in advance. The Superintendent or designee shall maintain a system for accurately recording payments received and tracking meals provided to each student.

(cf. 3550 - Food Service/Child Nutrition Program)

(cf. 3552 - Summer Meal Program)

(cf. 3553 - Free and Reduced Price Meals)

(cf. 3555 - Nutrition Program Compliance)

Note: Districts should, at a minimum, inform parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year and on an ongoing basis of district practices for students who have lost or forgotten their meal payment. In addition, districts should set up a system for notifying parents/guardians when a student's meal payment account has a low or negative balance.

According to USDA's Memorandum SP-23-2017, the district's policy on delinquent meal payments must be communicated in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school during the school year. CDE's Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin SNP-03-2017 states that, at a minimum, districts should use the methods specified below to communicate the district's meal policy.

At the beginning of the school year, and whenever a student enrolls during the school year, parents/guardians shall be notified of the district's meal payment policies and encouraged to prepay for meals whenever possible. The Superintendent or designee shall communicate the district's meal payment policies through multiple methods, including, but not limited to:

1. Explaining the meal charge policy within registration materials provided to parents/guardians at the start of the school year
2. Including the policy in print versions of student handbooks, if provided to parents/guardians annually
3. Providing the policy whenever parents/guardians are notified regarding the application process for free and reduced-price meals, such as in the distribution of applications at the start of the school year

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

4. Posting the policy on the district's web site
5. Establishing a system to notify parents/guardians when a student's meal payment account has a low or negative balance  
*(cf. 1113 - District and School Web Sites)*  
*(cf. 5145.6 - Parental Notifications)*

Note: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. According to the USDA's "School Meals - FAQs," any district that participates in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program and has one or more schools which use a system of meal tickets (or tokens, cards, or other similar medium of exchange) may limit the number of lost or stolen tickets it will replace for students each school year, as long as the limit is set at three or more. However, such a limit may only be established if the school (1) advises students and parents/guardians of the district's rules regarding replacement tickets when applications for free and reduced-price meals are distributed or approved; (2) maintains a list of students who have reported lost and stolen tickets and the number of occurrences for each student; (3) issues at least one advance warning to the student or the student's parent/guardian prior to refusing to issue a replacement ticket; and (4) does not deny meals to prekindergarten or younger primary students or students with disabilities who may be unable to take full responsibility for their meal tickets. Although these requirements apply only to students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals, USDA recommends that districts apply the same limits for students who pay full price for their meals in order to ensure that needy students are not overtly identified because of a disparate ticket replacement policy.

In any school that uses a system of meal tickets or other similar medium of exchange rather than an electronic point-of-sale system, the Superintendent or designee shall develop a process for providing replacement tickets to any student who reports a ticket as lost or stolen.

However, whenever any student reports an excessive number of lost or stolen tickets, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the parent/guardian and may provide an alternative method of tracking meal usage for that student.

In order to avoid potential misuse of a student's food service account by someone other than the student in whose name the account has been established, the Superintendent or designee shall verify a student's identity when setting up the account and when charging any meal to the account. The Superintendent or designee shall investigate any claim that a bill does not belong to a student or is inaccurate, and shall open a new account as appropriate for a student whose account appears to have been misused.

*(cf. 1340 - Access to District Records)*  
*(cf. 3580 - District Records)*

Note: Pursuant to CDE's Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin SNP-03-2017, districts must ensure that students who are approved for reduced-price meals receive all meals that are paid for. Any excess payments must be either carried over or refunded to the parents/guardians. The following paragraph extends this provision to also apply to students paying for full-price meals.

Any payments made to a student's food service account shall, if not used within the school year, be carried over into the next school year or be refunded to the student's parents/guardians.

**Unpaid and Delinquent Meal Charges**

Note: The following section reflects requirements applicable to districts participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program and may also be used by districts that do not participate in the program. Pursuant to USDA Memorandum SP 46-2016, districts participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program are mandated to have a written and clearly communicated meal charge policy which includes, but is not limited to, policy on the collection of delinquent meal charge debt. Such policy may be consistent for all students or vary by grade level. The following section may be revised to reflect district practice.

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

~~Students and their parents/guardians shall be notified whenever their account has a zero balance. Whenever a student's account has an unpaid balance of \$30 or more, parents/guardians shall be notified in writing that full payment is due within seven school days from the date of the notice.~~

~~In cases of repeated nonpayment by a student, the Superintendent or designee may contact parents/guardians to discuss the reasons for the nonpayment. The Superintendent or designee may evaluate individual circumstances to determine if the student's parents/guardians need assistance completing an application for free or reduced-price meals or need referral to social services.~~

The district shall not direct any action toward a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. (Education Code 49557.5)

Students who have unpaid meal charges shall be served a meal of their choice throughout the school year regardless of the level of debt incurred by the household.

Such students shall not be overtly identified by the use of special tokens, tickets, or other means and shall not be shamed, treated differently, or denied a meal of their choice. (Education Code 49557, 49557.5)

Note: Education Code 49557.5 requires that parents/guardians be notified no later than 10 days after a student's school meal account has reached a negative balance. At its discretion, the district may choose to also notify parents/guardians before the student's meal account reaches a negative balance. The following paragraph may be modified to reflect district practice.

No later than 10 days after a student's school meal account has reached a negative balance, the Superintendent or designee shall so notify the student's parent/guardian. Before sending this notification, the district shall exhaust all options and methods to directly certify the student for free or reduced-price meals. If the district is not able to directly certify the student, the notice to the parent/guardian shall include a paper copy of, or an electronic link to, an application for free or reduced-price meals and the Superintendent or designee shall contact the parent/guardian to encourage submission of the application. (Education Code 49557.5)

The district may attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent/guardian, but shall not use a debt collector. (Education Code 49557.5)

Note: The following optional paragraph reflects CDE guidance in its Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin SNP-03-2017.

The Superintendent or designee may enter into an agreement repayment plan with a student's parents/guardians for payment of the student's unpaid meal charge balance over a period of time. As necessary, the repayment plan may allow the unrecovered or delinquent debt to carry over into the next fiscal year.

The board will receive an annual report with the dollar amount of students with uncollected student debt, including the number of students with balances.

The district's efforts to collect debt shall be consistent with district policies and procedures, California Department of Education (CDE) guidance, and 2 CFR 200.426. The district shall not spend more than the actual debt owed in efforts to recover unpaid meal charges.

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain records of the efforts made to collect unpaid meal charges and, if applicable, financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal balance has become an operating loss.

**Reimbursement Claims**

Note: To streamline administration of state and federal meal programs, CDE has developed an online Child Nutrition Information and Payment System which must be used to submit reimbursement claims and to submit and track the status of applications and USDA food requests.

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain records of the number of meals served each day by school site and by category of free, reduced-price, and full-price meals. The Superintendent or designee shall submit reimbursement claims for school meals to ~~the California Department of Education~~ (CDE) using the online Child Nutrition Information and Payment System.

**Donation of Leftover Food**

To minimize waste and reduce food insecurity, the district may provide sharing tables where students and staff may return appropriate unused cafeteria food items to be made available to students during the course of a regular school meal time. If food on the sharing tables is not taken by a student, the school cafeteria may donate the food to a food bank or any other nonprofit charitable organization. (Health and Safety Code 114079)

*(cf. 3510 - Green School Operations)*

Food that may be donated includes prepackaged, nonpotentially hazardous food with the packaging still intact and in good condition, whole uncut produce that complies with Health and Safety Code 113992, unopened bags of sliced fruit, unopened containers of milk that are immediately stored in a cooling bin maintained at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, and perishable prepackaged food if it is placed in a proper temperature-controlled environment. The preparation, safety, and donation of food shall be consistent with Health and Safety Code 113980. (Health and Safety Code 114079)

**Cafeteria Fund**

Note: Education Code 38093 authorizes the Governing Board to establish one or more cafeteria revolving accounts to be treated as revolving cash accounts of the cafeteria fund.

All proceeds from food sales and other services offered by the cafeteria shall be deposited in the cafeteria fund as provided by law. ~~The income and expenditures of any cafeteria revolving account established by the Governing Board shall be recorded as income and expenditures of the cafeteria fund.~~ (Education Code 38090, 38091 **38093**)

*(cf. 3100 - Budget)*

*(cf. 3300 - Expenditures and Purchases)*

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

Note: Education Code 38101 permits a district, with approval from CDE, to utilize cafeteria funds to pay for the purchase of a mobile food facility. However, if the district uses federal reimbursements from any of the federal child nutrition programs for such purchase, the mobile food facility shall only be used to support the administration of those federal programs. Mobile food facilities used for any purposes other than to support the administration of federal child nutrition programs shall not be purchased with cafeteria funds.

The cafeteria fund shall be used only for those expenditures authorized by the Board as necessary for the operation of school cafeterias in accordance with Education Code 38100-38103, 2 CFR Part 200 Appendix VII, and the California School Accounting Manual. ~~(Education Code 38091, 38101; 2 CFR 225)~~

Note: The following optional paragraph is for use by districts that choose to provide universal breakfast (free of charge to all students) at one or more schools. Pursuant to Education Code 49550.5, districts may use cafeteria funds to supplement the cost of providing universal breakfast provided they submit the required certification to CDE. The requirement to submit certification does not apply to any district that provides universal breakfast pursuant to a federally authorized provision (e.g., Provision 1, 2, or 3 or the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Lunch Act).

With CDE approval, the district may use cafeteria funds to supplement the provision of universal breakfast. On or before July 1 of each year, the district shall submit to CDE a Board-signed application certifying that breakfast will be provided to all students at no charge and that any cost above the amount provided in federal reimbursement will be covered by the district with nonfederal funds. (Education Code 49550.5)

Any charges to, or transfers from, a food service program shall be dated and accompanied by a written explanation of the expenditure's purpose of and basis for the expenditure. (Education Code 38101)  
*(cf. 3110 - Transfer of Funds)*

Indirect costs charged to the food service program shall be based on either the district's prior year indirect cost rate or the statewide average approved indirect cost rate for the second prior fiscal year, whichever is less. (Education Code 38101)

Net cash resources in the nonprofit school food service shall not exceed three months average expenditures. (7 CFR 210.14, 220.7 ~~2 CFR 210.14~~)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture Foods**

Note: The following optional section is for use by districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program and receive foods from USDA pursuant to 42 USC 1755 and 7 CFR 250.1-250.70. CDE is responsible for ordering and distributing USDA foods for use in California schools

The district shall provide facilities for the storage and control of foods received through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that protect against theft, spoilage, damage, or other loss. Such storage facilities shall maintain donated foods in sanitary conditions, at the proper temperature and humidity, and with adequate air circulation. The district shall comply with all federal, state, or local requirements related to food safety and health and procedures for responding to a food recall, as applicable, and shall obtain all required health inspections. (7 CFR 250.14)

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

~~The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that foods received through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are handled, stored, and distributed in facilities which: (7 CFR 250.14)~~

- ~~1. — Are sanitary and free from rodent, bird, insect, and other animal infestation.~~
- ~~2. — Safeguard foods against theft, spoilage, and other loss.~~
- ~~3. — Maintain foods at proper storage temperatures.~~
- ~~4. — Store foods off the floor in a manner to allow for adequate ventilation.~~
- ~~5. — Take other protective measures as may be necessary.~~

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain inventories of USDA foods in accordance with 7 CFR 250.59 and CDE procedures, and shall ensure that foods are used before their expiration dates.

USDA **donated** foods shall be used in school lunches as far as practicable. USDA foods also may be used in other nonprofit food service activities, including, but not limited to, school breakfasts or other meals, a la carte foods sold to students, meals served to adults directly involved in the operation and administration of the food service and to other school staff, and training in nutrition, health, food service, or general home economics instruction for students, provided that any revenues from such activities accrue to the district's nonprofit food service account. (7 CFR 250.60)

**Contracts with Outside Services**

Note: The following optional section is for use by districts that contract for food service management services pursuant to Education Code 49554, 42 USC 1758, or 7 CFR 210.16 or consulting services pursuant to Education Code 45103.5, and should be modified to reflect the type(s) of contracts the district maintains; see the accompanying Board policy.

**The term of any contract for food service management or consulting services shall not exceed one year. Any renewal of the contract or further requests for proposals to provide such services shall be considered on a year-to-year basis. (Education Code 45103.5; 7 CFR 210.16)**

**Any contract for management of the food service operation shall be approved by CDE and comply with the conditions in Education Code 49554 and 7 CFR 210.16 as applicable. The district shall retain control of the quality, extent, and general nature of its food services, including prices to be charged to students for meals, and shall monitor the food service operation through periodic on-site visits. The district shall not enter into a contract with a food service company to provide a la carte food services, unless the company agrees to offer free, reduced-price, and full-price reimbursable meals to all eligible students. (Education Code 49554; 42 USC 1758; 7 CFR 210.16)**

**Any contract for consulting services shall not result in the supervision of food service classified staff by the management consultant, nor shall it result in the elimination of any food service classified staff or position or have any adverse effect on the wages, benefits, or other terms and conditions of employment of classified food service staff or positions. All persons providing consulting services shall be subject to applicable**

**BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS**  
**FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS/CAFETERIA FUND**

employment conditions related to health and safety as listed in Education Code 45103.5. (Education Code 45103.5)

*(cf. 3312 - Contracts)*

*(cf. 3515.6 - Criminal Background Checks for Contractors)*

*(cf. 3600 - Consultants) (cf. 4112.4/4212.4/4312.4 - Health Examinations)*

*(cf. 4212 - Appointments and Conditions of Employment)*

(Policy Share/AR 3551 - Oct-2017 **June 2020**)