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Related Entries: CND, CND-RA, JEA-RD, JPG, JPG-RA
Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Chief of School Support and Improvement

School Food and Nutrition Services Programs

A. PURPOSE

To set forth guidance regarding the ways in which Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is a partner in efforts to address childhood hunger in Montgomery County in order to support students' ability to learn, grow, and maintain health

To establish principles and strategies to guide efforts to encourage and assist all qualified students to apply for federally-funded Free and Reduced-price Meals (FARMs) while eliminating any stigma attached to, or preventing public identification of, students who qualify for FARMs.

To establish expectations for providing school meals in a cost effective and efficient manner that includes minimizing the accumulation of unpaid meal charges on students' school cafeteria accounts, and respectfully yet effectively collecting unpaid school cafeteria charges from the parent/guardians of students

31 B. ISSUE

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33 1. MCPS collaborates with community partners to address
34 childhood hunger by providing food and meal options
35 during the school day as well as over weekends and during
36 the summer.

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38 2. The operation of MCPS food and nutrition services must
39 be in alignment with state and federal requirements
40 under the National School Lunch Program and School
41 Breakfast Program, collectively known as the National
42 School Meals Program (NSMP).

43

44 3. A student or student's parent/guardian is expected to
45 provide payment for the student's school cafeteria
46 account charges, unless those charges are otherwise
47 funded by state or federal funds subject to income-based
48 or other criteria. Federal regulations require that
49 student cafeteria accounts that accumulate negative
50 balances are to be replenished by the student's
51 parent/guardian in a timely manner, or the costs must be
52 absorbed by the school district and/or paid with other
53 funds.

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55 C. POSITION

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57 1. The Montgomery County Board of Education affirms the
58 principles set forth in Board Policy JPG, *Wellness:
59 Physical and Nutritional Health*, to protect children's
60 health, well-being, and ability to learn, and further
61 affirms the Board's intent to mitigate the implications

62 of childhood hunger on students' well-being and academic
63 achievement.

64
65 2. MCPS, along with many community partners, works to
66 address childhood hunger. These partnerships allow the
67 establishment of various programs in low-income areas of
68 the Montgomery County community where meals and snacks
69 are served to children after the instructional day. The
70 After-School Care Snack and At-Risk Supper Programs
71 provide nourishment to students participating in a
72 scheduled activity. The Weekend Backpack Program is a
73 program through which community partners donate non-
74 perishable food items to schools which are then
75 distributed to students to ensure nourishment over the
76 weekend.

77
78 3. Children's learning and the need for good nutrition does
79 not stop when school lets out for summer. The Summer
80 Food Services Program (SFSP) provides nutritious meals
81 to students and children in Montgomery County where
82 there is a severe need. The SFSP is a valuable resource
83 for our students who may be at risk of hunger and poor
84 nutrition during the summer months. All of these
85 programs provide children the opportunity to receive
86 nourishment at no cost.

87
88 4. The Universal School Meals program provides breakfast
89 and lunch at no cost to the students in a select number
90 of schools. In addition, the Maryland Meals for
91 Achievement (MMFA) program provides breakfast in the

92 classroom every day at select schools at no charge,
93 regardless of a student's FARMs eligibility status.

94
95 5. In addition to these programs, the NSMPs address
96 childhood hunger by ensuring all students have access to
97 meals during the school day. Since there is a cost
98 associated with operating these programs, it is vital to
99 manage them in a cost effective way without overtly
100 identifying children who are unable to pay for their
101 meal, which may result in "meal shaming."

102
103 6. MCPS strives to provide, as appropriate, a variety of
104 food choices that are appealing, accommodate students'
105 dietary restrictions, and reflect the cultural diversity
106 of the MCPS community.

107
108 7. Parents/guardians are responsible for school cafeteria
109 account balances incurred by their student(s). Payment
110 is expected, in cash or through prepayment to the
111 student's school cafeteria account, at the point of sale
112 at the time of purchase, or through an online prepayment
113 system at any time.

114
115 8. All students will be treated with dignity and
116 confidentiality regarding school cafeteria accounts.

117
118 a) To the greatest extent possible, all communication
119 regarding the collection of students' unpaid school

120 cafeteria account balances shall be with
121 parents/guardians.

122 b) To the extent possible, consequences for unpaid
123 school cafeteria account charges shall not be
124 incurred by students.

125 c) No student shall be disciplined, or be restricted
126 from school activities or events, as a result of
127 unpaid school cafeteria account charges.

128
129 9. MCPS must collect unpaid school cafeteria account
130 charges so that MCPS food and nutrition services
131 maintain financial integrity and solvency.

132
133 a) For students who qualify for FARMS, there shall be
134 no threshold for the amount of unpaid meal charges
135 a student may accumulate.

136
137 b) For students who do not qualify for FARMS, the
138 superintendent of schools may establish a threshold
139 of unpaid school cafeteria account charges beyond
140 upon which such students shall be provided an
141 alternative reimbursable meal that is nutritionally
142 comparable to the reimbursable meal regularly
143 offered under the NSMP.

144
145 c) The alternate reimbursable meal shall also be
146 available for purchase by all students.

147

148 10. The superintendent of schools may seek to identify
149 funding options for unpaid school cafeteria account
150 charges in collaboration with community partners and
151 others who wish to make a contribution towards student
152 unpaid school cafeteria account charges.

153

154 D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

155

156 1. MCPS will continuously seek opportunities to address
157 childhood hunger by collaborating with community
158 partners to provide meal and other food options during
159 and beyond the instructional day.

160

161 2. MCPS will provide student meals in compliance with the
162 NSMP in a cost-effective manner that minimizes the
163 accumulation of unpaid school cafeteria account charges.

164

165 E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

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167 1. MCPS will develop strategies to promote consistent
168 access to meals for students without accruing unpaid
169 school cafeteria account charges by -

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171 a) encouraging prepayment of student cafeteria
172 accounts, and the use of prepayment systems that
173 allow parents/guardians to monitor and maintain
174 positive account balances and replenish funds when
175 needed;

176

177 b) developing effective, proactive outreach and broad-
178 based communications strategies to encourage all

179 students who may qualify for federally-funded FARMS
180 to apply; and,

181
182 c) providing parents/guardians with notifications of
183 students' cafeteria account balances when accounts
184 approach established low balances.

185
186 2. MCPS will communicate with parents/guardians
187 respectfully, privately, and directly to discuss
188 negative balances and to determine methods of repayment.

189
190 3. The superintendent of schools will develop procedures
191 to implement this policy.

192
193 4. Meal charge procedures must be provided in writing to
194 all households with students enrolled in MCPS at the
195 start of each school year and to households with students
196 transferring into MCPS during the school year.

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198 F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

199
200 This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance
201 with the Board's policy review process.

202
203 Related Sources: Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
204 (NSLA, 42 USC 1751); McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance
205 Act of 1987, as amended, Title VII, Subtitle B; U.S.
206 Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition
207 Services (FNS), SP 23-2017, *Unpaid Meal Charges:
208 Guidance and Q&A*, March 23, 2017; USDA, FNS, SP 29-2017,
209 *Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies*

210 *from Our Nation's Schools*, 2017 Edition, May 20, 2017;
211 Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, Section
212 7-601-605 and 7-701-704 as amended by the Maryland Cares
213 for Kids Act

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215

216 History: New policy, .