

To ensure that all students have access to healthy school lunches and to maintain compliance with federal regulations, the Augusta School Department has instituted a district meals charging policy. We strongly believe that nutritious meals are a vital component to a healthy school environment and that they may enhance learning while helping to minimize illness, absences and disciplinary problems.

It shall be the policy of our schools that when a meal is desired, payment for that meal is expected in advance or on that day unless the student has been approved for free meal benefits.

No student shall be denied a meal.

Free/reduced meal applications must be completed every year. Instructions to apply online are part of the annual paperwork. Paper applications are also available at each school and can be mailed home by request by calling your child's school. Applications are accepted at any time throughout the school year.

The Augusta School Department understands that many families may be experiencing financial difficulties, and we would urge those families to call the Nutrition Services Director at 207-626-2468 with any questions or concerns.

- We strongly encourage all meals to be pre-paid.
- Students will be allowed to charge a maximum of \$25.00. After a \$25.00 negative balance is reached, a letter will be sent home indicating that the maximum negative balance has been exceeded. The letter will include the current account balance.
- Students must have funds in their account to purchase milk, snacks, or drinks.
- Any student who buys just milk because he/she has brought a meal from home must pay the full price for the milk, even if they participate in the free or reduced price meal program.

The district will promote that it is the duty of the parent/guardian and/or student to track cafeteria account balances. This is done through PayPAMS.com for K-12 students. Payment portal can be accessed through the district website at www.augustaschools.org under the Departments tab and School Nutrition or PayPAMS.com. Meal account balances may also be obtained by calling the Nutrition Services Director at 207-626-2468.

Payment: Payments on lunch accounts may be made in the following ways:

1. **Grade PK-12 Online** – Create a free account on PayPAMS.com and pay with credit or debit card. This service allows you to make single or ongoing automatic payments.
2. **Mail** – Check or Money Order payable to Augusta School Department Nutrition Program sent to Augusta School Nutrition, 60 Pierce Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330.
3. **On-Site** – Checks, money orders or cash are accepted at all the school sites.

Denying Meals: No student shall be denied a meal for any reason. National School Lunch Program regulations prohibit schools from denying meals as a form of disciplinary action against any student.

Consequence for Negative Balance: Nutrition Services will record all negative balances owed to the school district. Until the balances are settled under the authority of the Nutrition Services Director and the Business Manager, **a student carrying a negative balance of more than \$100.00:**

1. ***May not be eligible for senior privileges.***
2. ***May not be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies.***
3. ***Balances may be referred to collections when they reach \$300.00 if no effort has been made to address the outstanding balance. Prior to the outstanding bill being sent to collections a final notice letter will be mailed.***
4. ***Students attending school in the district under a Superintendent's Agreement may not have the agreement renewed until balances are paid.***

De-activation - Account closing: If a parent/guardian does not want their child to participate in the meal programs at the student's school, the parent must contact the school principal and implement a written agreement between the parent/guardian and the school principal. The principal will report the student(s) whose account(s) should be deactivated to the Nutrition Director and a copy of the agreement will be kept on file. The deactivation will be completed within three school days of receipt of written agreement. If the student attempts to use the meal service, the cafeteria manager will inform the principal to contact the parent.

Contact: Nutrition Services may attempt to contact parents/guardians by phone, email or U.S. Postal Service using the contact information supplied to the school department, but it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that funds are on the child's account.