

FOOD SERVICE POLICIES



Payment

Payment for school meals is expected at the time of purchase. Parents or guardians are encouraged to monitor their child's meal account balance online and keep an adequate amount of funds in the child's account. To view your student's school meal account, go to the sendmoneytoschools.com.

It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to pay for or pack a child's lunch when sending them to school. The Food Services Department recognizes there might be occasions when a parent or guardian forgets to do so. Although we strongly discourage the practice, as a courtesy to families, the following charge policy is in place:

Merrill Community School's does not want students to go hungry. Students are allowed to charge meals to their accounts in an attempt to prevent students from going hungry.

Policies

- Elementary students may only charge up to \$20 (approximately eight lunches). Parents must make attempts to pay down this amount.
- Middle/High School students may only charge up to \$20 (approximately 8 lunches) before the emergency meal program* will be implemented.
- A la carte items, including milk and snack cart items, cannot be charged. Free and reduced students must purchase a full meal in order to receive their lunch benefits (if your child is only getting milk, it will cost \$0.45). EXAMPLE: Your student is eligible for free lunch, however decides to bring a lunch, but also wants to get a milk. The milk will be charged at \$0.45 because in order for it to qualify as a reimbursable lunch, they must take 3 items
- Some items are considered a la carte if they are purchased over and above the allotted lunch items that qualify as a reimbursable lunch. EXAMPLE: A student grabs two pieces of breakfast pizza (only 1 piece is allowed in reimbursable meal) so the second piece would be charged at \$1.50 to the student's account. Unpackaged items may not be put back. A charge will occur even if the student says they did not know that they were only allowed one and regardless of benefit status.
- All meal charges must be paid off by the end of the school year. Any unpaid charges will be carried forward to the next school year and count toward the student's ability to charge.
- No charging allowed two (2) weeks prior to the end of the school year.
- Money remaining in a student's account will be carried forward to the next school year.
- Students may not be permitted to participate in school events if they have unpaid charges. Parents of students with a balance that pay more than the daily cost of a lunch in order to pay down the debt on a weekly basis will be exempt from this rule.
- All students that are graduating must pay their bill in full before graduation day. If the account is still negative upon graduation day, the student will not be able to walk at graduation.



- Parents may charge adult meals to their student accounts, as long as it does not cause the account to have a negative balance.
- Staff members - adult pricing will be determined using the state's pricing requirements. This price will be posted at the beginning of each year. Each staff member will be given an ID number. This ID number must be used to make purchases during breakfast and lunch. All adult meals must be paid in full at the time of the purchase or prepayment may be made on their sendmoneytoschool.com accounts. No negative balances will be allowed in adult accounts.

*An emergency meal will be made available after eight charges. The emergency lunch consists of sandwich on whole grain bread, a serving of fruit and white milk. A hot entrée option will not be offered until the balance is brought to zero. The meal will be charged to the student's account and parents will be responsible for the outstanding charge. Parents of students with a balance that pay more than the daily cost of a lunch in order to pay down the debt on a weekly basis will be exempt from this rule and may receive the hot lunch option. No attempt to pay down debt on a weekly basis will be subject to emergency lunch program.

Unpaid Charges

To avoid unpaid charges, parents or guardians are encouraged to monitor and/or pay on their child's meal account with cash or check. Merrill Schools recognize the importance of eating a healthy meal while at school, and have worked with the cafeteria manager on a plan to remind parents when charges are near their limit. Once the student nears his/her limit, the cafeteria manager or school lunch cashier could provide any of the following reminders in an effort to help the student continue to receive school meals:

- Verbal reminder at the cash register
- Parent or guardian receives a written note or letter via the student or in the mail, along with an application for free or reduced-price meals
- Email/text message alerts will begin once student is in the negative
- Telephone call to parents from the food service director/principle/business manager

Parents and guardians are responsible to pay off their child's meal account. Any unpaid charges at the end of the school year remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian and will follow the student to the next school year. Students having a balance at the beginning of the year will not be able to charge until accounts are brought to zero.



Bad Debt

Merrill Community School's policy is to not allow students to go hungry. Students are allowed to charge meals to their accounts according to the charge policy, in an attempt to prevent students from going hungry. Merrill Community School's realizes that these charges may go unpaid.

Negative balances as of the end of the school year will roll over to the following school year of both active and inactive students. Balances of active students will continue to accumulate and follow the student till graduation. If the student still has unpaid food service charges at the time of their graduation, they will not be able to participate in graduation. Students may also be prevented to participate in other school events if their food service accounts is negative.

An Inactive student is a student that has graduated or no longer attends Merrill Community Schools as of June 30th. Inactive students that have balances that remain negative and have not been collected by December 31st of the same calendar year will be considered uncollectible. Once an active or inactive student's account is deemed uncollectible, funds will be given to the Food Service account by the general fund to cover the delinquent funds and bring them to zero balances. Once an active meal balance becomes uncollectible and are made whole in the Food Service account, records relating to these charges must be maintained in accordance with 7 CFR 210.9(b)(17) & 7 CFR 210.15(b).

Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) (http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) online, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.