



LABRAE LOCAL SCHOOLS

Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

Purpose

It is the goal of the LaBrae Local Schools Food Service Department to provide nourishing meals to our students to help fuel their learning in the classroom. However, the Food Service Department operates as a self-funded entity, like any other business, and unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the LaBrae Local Schools.

The intent of this policy is:

- To be transparent with our families on the district procedures for handling unpaid meal charges.
- To establish policies that are age-appropriate for our students
- To encourage parent/guardian responsibility of meal payments and charges
- To outline the actions the district will take to implement and enforce the policy and collect outstanding debts

Although the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not require schools to serve meals to full-pay or reduced eligible students without payment, LaBrae Local Schools wishes to not deny meals to our students.

Outlined below are the actions the district will make to enforce the meal charge policy.

Purchasing Meals in the Cafeteria

Every student enrolled LaBrae has a cafeteria account created during the enrollment process. Students will use their Student ID number to access their account and purchase meals in the cafeteria. Money for meal purchases can be prepaid to a student's account electronically at **PaySchools Central** or by sending cash or check in an envelope, marked with the student's name and ID number, to the office. Checks can be made payable to LaBrae Local Schools. When a student presents in line, we serve them according to this policy, unless the parent/guardian has set a purchase restriction on the account. Restrictions must be arranged with the Food Service Office directly at 330.898.5863.

Charging Meals in the Cafeteria

Only complete meals can be charged to an account. Meal charges in the cafeteria are to be made in emergency situations when a student has forgotten their lunch or money. Charging a la carte or extra items is never permitted. Students are prohibited from purchasing a la carte items with cash if they have a negative balance on their account. The cash must first be used as payment toward the negative balance.

Once a student has a negative balance due to charges, the LaBrae Cafeteria will make a coordinated effort to communicate to the parent that a negative balance exists and inform them of the need to pay off the charges. Students will not be denied a meal, and their account will continue to be charged for every meal they take not paid for in cash or from their account balance. This charge protocol also applies to students on a reduced price meal plan.

All charges made on a student's account remains the parents' responsibility.

- **Adults are prohibited from charging meals to their account.**

Free Status Students

Eligibility for free or reduced price meal benefits starts the date an application is approved in our system. Until that time, parents are responsible for providing a packed meal or lunch money for their students. If meals are charged to a student's account before an application is approved, those debts CANNOT be forgiven, per Title 7 CFR 245.6.

The debt will remain on the account until the parent pays it off in full. Once a student is eligible for free meals, even with meal account debt, they will be offered the regular menu items.

Collection of Meal Debt

The Food Service Department will use the following methods to notify families and collect debt:

1. Postal mail
2. Email
3. School Messenger Call/Text
4. Individual phone calls
5. In-person meeting with building principal
6. Collection agency services utilized

For those who abuse the charge policy and accumulate an excessive amount of meal charges, a meeting with the building principal and the Food Service Director may be initiated. Also, at the end of the school year, LaBrae Local Schools will turn the student debt over to a collections agency when an individual student debt, or cumulative family meal debt, reaches \$250. Additionally, if a student's cafeteria debt is turned over to collections, the District will charge a 15% administrative fee to the parents for the collection services.

The cafeteria account debt is considered a school fee and remains with the student throughout their enrollment at LaBrae Local Schools. Any negative balance on a student's lunch room account will be added to the student's school fee account at the conclusion of the school year. If left unpaid, meal account debt will accumulate each school year until it is paid in full. All outstanding charges must be paid before withdrawing or graduating, as transcripts will be held. As the district will continue to make efforts to collect the debt, certain privileges will be revoked, such as:

1. Report cards and transcripts held
2. Non-academic field trip privileges held
3. Admission into Homecoming/Prom prohibited.
4. Limiting other privileges at the discretion of the administration