

East Greenbush Central School District
Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan
May 23, 2018

The goal of the East Greenbush Central School District (the "District") is to provide student access to nutritious free or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our District. The purpose of this plan is to ensure compliance with federal requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this plan is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the East Greenbush Central School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this plan pertain to regular reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only.

The following plan components are designed to ensure compliance with the Law:

A. Student Meal of Choice

1. The District shall provide all students, upon request, any reimbursable meal offered on any particular day regardless of any balance owed on a student's meal account.
2. Parents or guardians may notify food service staff in writing to be placed on the point of sale (POS) system, alerting the cashier of a request for "no charging".
3. The District only allows charges of reimbursable meals. No charges are permitted for a la carte items, adult meals, or other similar items; these items must be paid for in cash, or prepaid to the cashier.

B. Staff Training

1. All food service staff shall receive training at the start of each school year regarding the District's Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan, related procedures, and communication with parents regarding eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for their children.

2. The School Lunch Manager shall access appropriate written documents, videos, and other training materials if offered by the Child Nutrition Unit of the New York State Education Department or state professional organizations.

3. The School Lunch Manager shall make random observations of students at each school building to ensure compliance with the District's Plan at least twice per fiscal year.

4. Parents and guardians with unpaid meal accounts shall be provided with information, assistance and accessibility to free and reduced meal applications by Food Service staff. All parents and guardians shall be informed of eligibility of free and reduced meals at the start of the school year in accordance with procedures set forth by the New York State Education Department. Application information will be posted on the District's website at www.egcsd.org, included in new registration packets, and be available through the principals, guidance offices, food service office and the registrar's office.

C. Communications Procedures to Parents

1. Information on accessing the MySchoolBucks system to prepay meals is available on the District's website at www.egcsd.org. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day.

2. Parents and guardians accessing the district-wide payment system (My School Bucks) will receive unpaid balance alerts by email if requested.

3. Parents and guardians, whether or not accessing the district-wide payment system, shall receive email notices or phone calls from cafeteria personnel or the Food Service Office regarding unpaid balances. In the event that a balance remains unpaid for more than \$25, the School Lunch Manager will make a notification in writing to the parent or guardian.

4. The School Lunch Manager may confer with the building principal, social worker, guidance counselor, or other authorized staff for assistance in contacting the parent or guardian.

5. Remaining funds at the end of the year in a parent's or guardian's meal account will automatically be carried over to the next year unless a written request for refund is received by the School Lunch Manager.

6. Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students require a written or emailed request to the Food Service Manager. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account with a written request.

7. Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the East Greenbush Central School District Food Service Program.

D. Communication Procedures to Support Free & Reduced Meal Eligible Families

1. In the event a parent or guardian owes more than \$25 for meals charged by a student, the District shall:

a. Make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals,

b. Make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application,

c. Require the School Lunch Manager to contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application. The School Lunch Manager will make a referral to the building principal, social worker or guidance counselor so that they may determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal, and

d. Offer any other assistance that is appropriate.

2. The School Lunch Manager shall determine eligible families through the Direct Certification Process (DC download through the POS system) at least three times during the school year. The School Lunch Manager shall search the site monthly for newly eligible students.

3. All new students, previously eligible students, or students identified as needy by authorized school staff will be manually searched on the New York State Education Department website by the School Lunch Manager to determine eligibility. If the student is determined to be eligible, the parent or guardian will be notified by the Food Service Office.

4. Before the annual thirty-day grace period for free and reduced meals is exhausted, the Food Service Office will contact the parent or guardian by phone or email if a new application for free and reduced meals has not been submitted. The Food Service Office will offer assistance with completion of the application and as necessary, coordinate with the building principal, social worker, guidance counselor or other authorized staff to provide the assistance.

E. Procedures Designed to Decrease Student Distress or Embarrassment

1. No District staff shall publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means, including but not limited to requiring a student wear a wristband or hand stamp.

2. No District staff shall require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals.

3. No District staff shall require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals.

4. No District staff shall take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. The District may only attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector, as defined in section eight hundred three of the federal Consumer Credit Protection Act, 5 U.S.C. Sec. 1692a.

5. School food service staff shall receive training to:

a. Access accounts by student identification numbers rather than names in the first instance,

b. Ensure that the student account screen can only be viewed by the cashier,

c. Make reference to accounts as generic accounts so that the status of the account is not revealed,

d. Notify the owner of the account that inquiry of the account is only for the owner,

e. Maintain confidentiality of student meal account information between the cashier and the student,

f. Not reveal account balances unless upon request of the student

F. Procedures to Handle Unpaid Meal Charges

1. Every two weeks, the Food Service staff will review account balances in the Point of Sale system to identify unpaid balances. Upon review, unpaid accounts totaling greater than \$25 will require the Food Service staff to send an email notice to the parent or guardian.

2. If two or three e-mail notices are not acknowledged by the parent or guardian, the Food Service Staff will make a phone call to the contact information within the PowerSchool student data system.

3. If the contact by the Food Service staff through email or phone is unsuccessful, the unpaid balance will be referred to the School Lunch Manager. The School Lunch Manager may contact the building principal, social worker, guidance counselor, or authorized staff for assistance.

4. Nothing in this section is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt on school food service accounts.

5. The District is prohibited from charging interest or fees on unpaid balances at any time. Convenience fees charged to parents who pay for meals by credit card through MySchoolBucks.com are allowable.

G. Procedures to Enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

1. The District shall follow the procedures to enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program set forth by the New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Unit.

2. Such procedures shall include, at the beginning of the school year, the District providing a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet and accessibility through the District website at www.egcsd.org.

3. Completed applications from the parents or guardians should be provided to the building principal, who will forward to the School Lunch Manager. Parents or guardians who are on the Statewide Direct Certification System (DCMP) are automatically downloaded and do not need to submit a paper application. Parents or guardians submitting a certification letter from the Department of Social Services stating eligibility also do not need to submit a paper application.

4. The School Lunch Manager will review the applications and determine eligibility according to New York State Education Department guidelines, including direct certification and Department of Social Services certification for qualified individuals.

5. The School Lunch Manager will notify parents and guardians by letter if their children qualify or do not qualify for free and reduced meals.

H. Procedures for Students Not Submitting Free and Reduced Meal Applications

1. Each student enrolled in the free and reduced meal program in the previous year is automatically granted a thirty school day grace period at the start of the school year for the parent or guardian to submit a new application.

2. One week prior to the expiration of the thirty school day grace period, Food Service staff will contact the parent or guardian reminding him or her that a completed application has not been received.

3. The Food Service Manager will then review the list of uncompleted applications with the Principal to determine if the student should qualify for free and reduced meals under the administrative prerogative guidelines through the New York State Education Department.

4. In the event that the Principal and School Lunch Manager agree that an application be completed on the student's behalf by the Principal, he or she will do so in accordance with title seven, section 245.6(d) of the code of federal regulations and guidance from the New York State Education Department. The School Manager will then update the District's Point of Sale System to designate the student for free meals and maintain documentation for audit purposes.

I. Coordination with School Liaisons for Homeless, Foster and Migrant Students

1. On an annual basis at the organizational meeting, the Board of Education will appoint a school liaison for homeless, foster and migrant students in accordance with policy #5151, Homeless Children.

2. The liaison will contact the School Lunch Manager to provide written notice that a student is designated as homeless, foster, or migrant and qualifies for free meals on an immediate basis.

3. The School Lunch Manager will update the Point of Sale System to designate the student for free meals and maintain a listing for audit purposes.

J. Who to Contact Regarding the Plan

1. The School Lunch Manager, Phyllis Sanford-Krug, may be contacted regarding implementation of the plan at phone number 518-207-2474 or by email at sanforph@egcsd.org.