



# **The Langan School, Langan School at Prospect and Albany CloverPatch Preschool Meal Charge and Prohibition against Meal Shaming Policy**

## **I. Purpose**

The goal of The Langan School, Langan School at Prospect, and Albany CloverPatch Preschool programs is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/guardian has an unpaid school meal balance is not shamed or treated differently than one whose parent/guardian does not have an unpaid meal balance.

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

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout The Langan School, Langan School at Prospect, and Albany CloverPatch Preschool programs in a way that does not stigmatize distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school lunch meals only. The Langan School, Langan School at Prospect, and Albany CloverPatch Preschool programs provide this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their lunch money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

## **II. Policy**

- **Free Meal Benefit** - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar purchases must be paid/prepaid.
- **Reduced Meal Benefit** - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch meal of their choice at zero cost each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless a student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid



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- Full Pay Students – Students will pay for meals at the school’s published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless a student’s parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

**ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:**

- School staff and Food Service Vendor employees will be trained annually and as needed to ensure that this school policy is implemented accurately and consistently; utilizing internal resources or the NYSED Webinar.
- Designated Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed, on the procedures for managing meal charges and ongoing eligibility certification free or reduced price meals.

**PARENT NOTIFICATION:**

- Parents/guardians will be notified when their child’s account balance is at a negative meal charge balance within the specific week it becomes negative; and on a weekly basis thereafter.

**PARENT OUTREACH:**

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility free or reduced price meals.
- School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment or annual packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.
- All communication and correspondence with parents/ guardians will be done so confidentially. All correspondence in regards to meal charges and/or applications will be handled via sealed envelopes.



### **MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:**

- School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be overtly identified by some item or symbol they wear or produce; nor will they be required to perform any work task to pay for meals
- School will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- School will take no direct action at a student to collect unpaid school meal balances.
- School will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meals

### **ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:**

- Designated Finance staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility. NYSED provides updated direct certification data monthly.
- School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price applications and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet and during the year for new enrolling students.
- School will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- School will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- School will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators to certify eligible students. School liaisons required for homeless, foster and migrant students should coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via credit card with our Finance Department or with a check payable to: **Center for Disability Services**



Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the *Center for Disability Services* Food Service Program.