

A+ Charter Schools - Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

A+ Charter Schools recognize the important link between proper nutrition and academic success. The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for serving meals when students do not have money to pay, preventing unpaid balances, and ensuring eligible children are certified for free and reduced-price school meals.

Meal charges:

Because hunger is an impediment to learning, breakfast and lunch are available everyday. No student eligible for free meals will be denied a reimbursable meal for any reason. Non-eligible students will be required to maintain a meal balance of less than \$20 or be on a payment plan in order to receive a school meal. To prevent overt identification, students that have a meal balance above \$20.00 and are not on a payment plan will be told before service that they will not be served until their unpaid balance is addressed.

All non-eligible students will be charged for their meal.

Preventing unpaid meal charges:

School staff acts to prevent unpaid meal charges in the following ways:

- Meal applications are made available prior to the start of the school year, throughout the school year, and included in all new enrollment packets.
- All program materials are available in both English and Spanish as well as other languages upon request.
- State data is promptly utilized to certify eligible children without an application.
- Allows households to pay for meals in advance.
- Ensures that households are aware of negative account balances and the potential to accrue meal debt by contacting the family directly to notify parents of delinquent balances.

Collecting unpaid meal debt:

Online payments may be made through <https://www.ezschoolapps.com/ParentLogin.aspx>

In person payments may be made at the A+ Charter Schools front office.

Mail in payments may be made to: **41735 W. Alan Stephens Parkway, Maricopa, AZ 85138**

Communication regarding unpaid meal debt shall focus primarily on parents or guardians in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. Meal balances may be requested at any time by asking the cashier or office staff.

Prior to contacting households regarding unpaid meal debt, the school nutrition staff shall ensure that the student is not participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, or other federal programs, which would confer categorical eligibility for free school meals, or is not homeless, migrant, or in foster care, and would allow them to be certified without an application.

Any household with a negative school lunch account balance shall be contacted immediately by school nutrition staff by email, phone, or letter home to provide information on how to apply for free or reduced-price school meals or to add funds to the school nutrition account.

For households that cannot afford to pay their school meal charges, the school nutrition department will work with them to establish a payment plan. Households that are subsequently certified for free school meals at a point later in the school year shall not be required to repay school meal debt accrued prior to the certification date of the application. Households that are subsequently certified for Reduced price school meals, prior meal debt will be calculated at the reduced-price rate for which repayment will be required for any school meal debt accrued prior to the certification date of the application.

Carry-over unpaid meal debt:

Negative balances must be cleared up before the end of the school year. Notices will continue until the debt has been paid. All positive/negative balances at the end of the school year will carry over to the next school year.