

## Island Park UFSD

### **Policy #5504: Prohibition Against Meal Shaming**

#### **I. Purpose**

The goal of the Island Park Union Free School District (UFSD) is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently from a pupil whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meal charges.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, New York State Education Law 908 as added by Section 2 of Part B of Chapter 56 of the laws of 2018, *Prohibition Against Meal Shaming*, 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 policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout Island Park Schools in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our district. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. The Island Park UPSD provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

#### **II. Plan**

**Free Meal Benefit** – Eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid with cash or prepaid using the district's online payment system that may be used to make cafeteria account payments using a credit or debit card.

**Reduced Meal Benefit** – Eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast and a lunch of their choice each day. Students can pay for the reduced price meal using cash or using the district's online payment system that may be used to make cafeteria account payments using a credit or debit card. If students do not pay at the breakfast and lunch times meals are provided, they will be considered to be a reimbursable obligation of the parent or guardian, unless the 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 with cash or prepaid using the district's online payment system that may be used to make cafeteria account payments using a credit or debit card.

**Full Pay Students** – Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. If students do not pay at the breakfast and lunch times meals are provided, they will be considered to be a reimbursable obligation of the parent or guardian, unless the 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 with cash or prepaid using the district's online payment system that may be used to make cafeteria account payments using a credit or debit card.

#### Ongoing Staff Training:

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

#### Parent Notification:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and unpaid meal charges are due.
- Parents/guardians will be notified of the accrued meal charges at the end of each month and then every two weeks thereafter.
- Parents/guardians may arrange a repayment schedule with the district, without charge of any interest or fees in connection with the meals charged.

#### Parent Outreach:

- The social worker and/or food service manager will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- The social worker and/or food service manager 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 packet.
- The social worker and/or principal 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.

#### Minimizing Student Distress:

- The school social worker, food service manager or principal will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.
- Staff members, e.g., food service, school monitors, etc will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Staff members, e.g., food service, school monitors, etc will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Staff members, e.g. food service, school monitors, etc 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.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.

#### Ongoing Eligibility Certification:

- The food service manager, director of pupil personnel services, or data analyst will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility. NYSED provides updated direct certification data monthly.
- The school social worker, food service manager or principal will provide parents and guardians with free and reduced price meal applications and instructions at the beginning of each school year with school enrollment and back-to-school packets.

- Should the district migrate to use of an electronic meal application, the school social worker, food service manager or principal will provide assistance with the process, if need be or an explanation of the process in the school enrollment and back-to-school packets and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.
- The social workers and food service manager will work together to ensure that at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year are provided to families identified as owing meal charges.
- The district 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.
- The social worker and director of pupil personnel services will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators to certify eligible students. School liaisons required for homeless, foster and migrant students shall 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 two ways:

1. Use of a check made payable to *(Island Park UFSD Cafeteria Fund for the Account of Child's First and Last Names and mailed or delivered to the security aide for the attention of: Ms. Dena DeBari, Food Service Manager, Island Park UFSD, 150 Trafalgar Boulevard, Island Park, NY 11558).*
2. Via the district's MySchoolBucks online payment system; for information regarding MySchoolBucks, go to the district website (<http://www.ips.k12.ny.us/>).

**Parents and guardians have a responsibility to ensure funds are maintained in student accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Parents and guardians are also expected to monitor their child's account and know if the balance reflects a debit or credit.** Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students must be submitted via a written or emailed ([ddebari@islandparkschools.org](mailto:ddebari@islandparkschools.org)) request of any money remaining in a student account. 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 or emailed request.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Island Park UFSD Cafeteria Fund.

**School Letterhead**

September 1, 2018

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s):

The District’s food service programs in our cafeterias are funded, in part, with revenues from students’ purchases. They are also funded with Federal and State funds, since we participate in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). As participants in the Federal and State programs, we comply with all regulations ensuring students access to free and reduced price school meals.

The Governor’s 2018-2019 Executive Budget amended New York State Education Law requiring school districts to develop a written plan to ensure that a student whose parent or guardian has unpaid meal charges is not shamed or treated differently from a pupil whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meal charges. Under this revised law, every student who does not have a lunch (even if his/her account is in arrears) must be provided with a lunch of the student’s choice, unless a parent specifies otherwise, since these are considered charged meals for which the parent/guardian is held accountable to pay.

In the event your child is without a meal (and is not eligible for free lunch), the District will provide him/her with a meal of his/her choice. If you do not want your child to be able to charge a meal, in the event he/she says he/she has no breakfast or lunch, please complete the form below. Thank you.

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Island Park UFSD  
Meal Opt-Out Form

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want school administration or staff to provide my child with a meal, in the event he/she does not have one and makes this request.

Parent’s Name (Please print.) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Child’s Name (Please print.) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this completed form to the school office. Or, mail it to the Food Service Manager, Ms. Dena DeBari, Lincoln Orens Middle School, 150 Trafalgar Blvd, Island Park, NY 11558.*