Concord School District  
Communications Committee  
August 17, 2015

Committee members: Jennifer Patterson, Chair, Kass Ardinger, Tom Croteau,  
Jim Richards

Board members: Nathan Fennessey (arrived at 6:11 p.m.), Alana Kimball

Administration: Superintendent Terri Forsten, Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley, Business Administrator Jack Dunn

Other Attendees: School Nutrition Services Director Donna Reynolds

Communications Committee Chair Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m., noting that the agenda was to discuss the proposed new School Nutrition Services (SNS) Department charging policy. Jack Dunn introduced the new SNS Director, Donna Reynolds, and then presented the proposed policy.

I. PURPOSE/POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the SNS Department. The goals of this policy are:

- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.
- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, students and parents/guardians to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish policies that are age appropriate.
- To encourage parents/guardians to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.

It was suggested to state that the SNS Department is self-sustaining.

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The SNS Department: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the school district of outstanding balances. The SNS Department is also responsible for notifying the student’s parents/guardians of low or outstanding balances.

The School District: Responsible for supporting the SNS Department in collection activities.
The Parents/Guardians: Immediate payment.

III. ADMINISTRATION

Free and Reduced Lunch Students

1. Free Meal Status students will not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Free meal status allows a child to receive a free meal(s) every day. A la carte items are not part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

2. Reduced Meal Status students will not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Reduced meal status allows a child a meal(s) at a reduced amount determined by eligibility. A la carte items are not part of the NSLP.

3. Paid Meal Status students shall not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Paid meal status assumes the child has the ability to pay for a meal(s) and a la carte items. A la carte items are not part of the NSLP.

Jim Richards suggested better communication with parents through open houses and other school events. Ms. Patterson proposed finding a simpler system for paying by credit card that allows parents to prepay and have the credit card fee waived.

Mr. Dunn noted that communication regarding status and changes in status is communicated through the SNS office with the help of school guidance counselors.

All Other Students

1. Elementary School Students:
   - Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.
   - When the student reaches a negative balance the student shall still receive a meal, but the account will continue to be charged.

2. Middle School Students:
   - Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.
   - When the student reaches a negative balance the student shall still receive a meal, but the account will continue to be charged.
   - When the student reaches a negative balance, no a la carte items will be sold to the child.

3. High School Students:
   - Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.
   - When the student reaches a negative balance, no a la carte items will be sold to the child.
There was discussion that the word “but” in “2.” for Elementary and Middle School should be changed to “and”.

It was also suggested that “1.” for all three levels should read “Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians weekly.”

Another suggestion was for “3.” Middle School and “2.” High School that instead of “no a la carte items will be sold to the child” it should read “no a la carte items will be charged to the account,” allowing students to purchase with cash only.

Staff Account Balances

The district provides the opportunity for staff to purchase meals from the school cafeteria. Staff may pay per meal or establish a prepaid account, but meals cannot be purchased on credit. If a staff member’s meal account is positive at the end of the school year, it will be automatically carried over to the next school year. If requested, the balance will be refunded to the account owner. It is the responsibility of the staff member to monitor his/her account balance.

Mr. Dunn added that the administration is exploring the possibility of staff being able to deduct the cost of meals from their paychecks.

Balances Owed

The SNS Department shall begin notifying parents/guardians when the student’s account has $15 dollars remaining. Once a student’s account balance becomes negative, the parents/guardian shall be notified by letter, email, phone, online payment system, or the district’s notification system stating that the student’s account balance is negative with the opportunity to replenish the student’s account by cash, check or credit card (a convenience fee may apply). When a student’s negative balance reaches $10, a second notice will be sent to the parents/guardians. When a student’s negative balance reaches $15, a demand for payment notice will be sent. If payment is not received to satisfy the negative balance within 10 calendar days, the district will begin small claims court proceedings.

There was a suggestion to add “cost associated with proceedings will be billed to the parent.”

All accounts must be settled at the end of a school year. If any account has a negative balance on July 1, the district will begin small claims court proceedings immediately.

The committee suggested changing “the district will begin” to the “the district may begin” to allow the administration some discretion on collections.

Checks Returned for Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF)

When a check is returned to the District for “NSF,” a letter will be sent from the SNS Director to inform the parents/guardians. Payment for the NSF check must be in the form of cash, cashier’s check, or money order. Payment must be received within ten
(10) days of the date of the letter. A NSF fee will be incurred and will be included in notification from the SNS Director. The NSF fee and the amount of the check will be deducted from the student’s lunch account immediately upon notice from the bank and the above-mentioned rules will take effect.

Balances Owed with No Response by Parents/Guardians

As of May 1, the SNS program must begin to close the books for the school year. As a result, the point of sale system will be blocked from accepting deficit account balances. Parents/Guardians may be sent a written request for “Payment in Full.” (The deposit requests will be sent home with the student, mailed to home, emailed, and/or phone call.) If the payment is not received, the Superintendent or his/her designee may take one or more of the following actions, unless or until prohibited by state law or regulation:

1. Do not issue diploma.*

2. Prohibit participation of student in the program.

3. Prohibit participation of student or other students in the student’s household from participating in any future fee-based program, extra-curricular activity, or non-curricular school activity; or until or unless outstanding balances are resolved.

4. Prohibit student participation in senior activities or graduation exercises.

5. Referral to small claims court.

6. All charges not paid before the end of the school year will still be owed to the SNS Department revolving account, and blocks will be placed on the account until the balance is paid.

7. Hold the transfer of student records/transcripts and/or report cards until the SNS Department account is paid in full.*

8. Restrict the purchase of parking passes, yearbooks, etc.

9. Seniors must pay all charges before receiving their graduation cap and gown.

After much discussion about whether it is the student’s or parents’ responsibility to pay, and discussion about the student’s or parents’ ability to pay, as well as how to move forward with parents/guardians who consistently do not pay, the Committee suggested and agreed that it was best to remove the section “Balances Owed with No Response by Parents/Guardians” for now.

Balances Owed to Families

All seniors will receive a notice in May of any remaining money in their lunch accounts. They will receive a letter to elect to move this money into a sibling lunch account or to receive a refund. All refund requests will be sent to the SNS Department and then forwarded to the Business Office for payment.
Blocks on Accounts

A parent may call the SNS Director to place a block on their child’s account to prohibit the purchase of a la carte items or to set a dollar cap. The Business Administrator may instruct the SNS Director to place a block on a student’s account due to non-payment of district fees or other collection issues.

Refunds
Withdrawn Students

For any student who is withdrawn, a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. An e-mail request is also acceptable.

Graduating Students

Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be offered a refund. Funds can also be transferred to a sibling’s account with a written request.

Undclaimed Funds

All refunds must be requested within one year. Undclaimed funds will then become the property of the Concord School District SNS Program.*

At the end of each school year, the Concord School District must purchase the debt from the SNS Department, making the SNS Department whole. The SNS Department will submit an invoice to the SAU/District, listing all students with negative balances. The Concord School District will transfer funds matching the total of the invoice. The debt will then belong to the Concord School District. If the SNS Department receives payment for the negative amounts, the Department will need to transfer those funds back to the Concord School District.

The committee suggested removing the last paragraph as it is procedural rather than a policy.

The Committee voted 4-0 (motioned by Tom Croteau, seconded by Kass Ardinger) to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, Chair
Jack Dunn, Recorder