

Warwick School Committee
Lunch Policy Statement
8 May 2019

****For Immediate Release****

The Warwick School Committee, Policy Subcommittee is meeting today to review the School Lunch Policy. We have reviewed it thoughtfully with the best interest of our students in mind. That said, there are several points that I would like to clarify.

Warwick Public Schools participates in the National School Lunch Program. This is a federally assisted meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. Each child who qualifies for the program is provided with a balanced meal at a reduced cost or no cost to the student and their parent(s).

In addition to the National School Lunch Program, Warwick Schools offer secondary schools a variety of school lunch choices, that include à la carte options such as pizza, fries, ice cream, and other snacks. Students may buy these items using funds from their school lunch accounts. If a student does not have funds in their school lunch account to purchase à la carte items, they are permitted to “charge” those items to their account. A student’s parent/guardian is then sent two notices informing them of the debt owed to the School Department for those à la carte items. It is only at this point, if the debt is not cleared, that a student can no longer purchase à la carte items.

Some relevant facts . . .

- 1653 students have a balance on their lunch accounts as of Friday, 3 May 2019;
- Balances range from under \$1.00 to over \$500.00;
- Total outstanding \$77,000;
- 72% of balances are from students who are not enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program;

- 28% of balances are from families that are currently enrolled in the Free/Reduced Lunch Program (footnote) 34% of WPS is free/reduced;
- Monday & Tuesday approx. \$14,000 were collected from outstanding balances. However, this is a moving target as of today more debt was incurred;
- Free/reduced applications are available throughout the year;

If a student does not have funds in their school lunch account to purchase à la carte items, they are not permitted to “charge” those items to that account. However, they are permitted to “charge” a meal.

Steps in the communication process with parents is as follows:

- Step 1: weekly lists showing students with balances along with letters addressed to parents/guardians are sent to schools.
- Step 2: If balances are not cleared or a payment plan is not established within a month from first notice, Food Service Coordinator then mails out a second notice.
- Step 3: If balances are not cleared or a payment plan is not established within a month of The second notice, the Coordinator of Non-Instructional Services mailed out a third notice.
- Step 4: If balances are not cleared or a payment plan is not established within a month from the third notice, the Executive Director of Finance and Operations will mail out a final notice. These notices are sent by Certified mail.
- Step 5: We are very flexible with our payment plan. Once a student is on a payment plan your account is considered in good standing.

In closing, please understand that no students are left without a meal under our current Policy. Once the student’s access to à la carte items has been shut off, students are provided with a balanced lunch of a sun butter and jelly sandwich (which is a daily choice on the school lunch menu), vegetables, fruit, and milk. However, after careful review and consideration the policy subcommittee is recommending that the Warwick School Committee allow the students their choice of lunch regardless of their account status.

With this Policy we seek to find a balance between being fiscally responsible and ensuring that all our students are provided with a healthy, nutritious lunch.

With respect to donations, we are grateful for any financial support that has been offered. We are working with our attorneys to ensure that we accept donations in compliance with the law and that the donations are applied in an equitable manner. Please note that 72% of the debt has been accrued by paying students, not children on the Free and Reduced Lunch Plan.

Sincerely yours,

Karen

Karen Bachus, MA
Chairwoman
Warwick School Committee (City Wide)