

Mexico Academy and Central School

**PLAN FOR PROHIBITION AGAINST
MEAL SHAMING**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

District Mission

District Vision

Education Law § 908

Students Will Receive a Meal

Staff Training

Parent Notification

Supporting Family Enrollment in National Free and Reduced Price Meal Program

Procedures to Decrease Student Distress or Embarrassment

Procedures to Handle Unpaid Meal Charges

Procedures to Enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program

District Mission

Educate and motivate our students to be successful, responsible citizens.

District Vision

Recognized as a school district that inspires excellence and leadership in all!

Education Law § 908

Education Law Section 908, of the laws of 2018, requires all public school districts, charter schools and non-public schools in the state that participate in the national school lunch program or school breakfast program in which there is a school at which all pupils are not eligible to be served breakfast and lunch under the community eligibility provision or provision two of the federal national school lunch act, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1751 et seq., to develop a plan to ensure that a pupil whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent or guardian does not have unpaid school meal fees.

Students Will Receive a Meal

In the event that a student whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal fees requests a meal, the school district shall provide the student with the student's meal of choice for that school day of the available reimbursable meal choices for such school day, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. However, the school district shall only provide access to reimbursable meals, not a la carte items, adult meals, or other similar items.

Staff Training

Staff will be trained in the following manner to ensure that the school district's procedures are carried out correctly and how the affected parents and guardians will be provided with assistance in establishing eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for their children.

Staff will be briefed on expectations and updated on what measures the district undertakes to assist parents and guardians at the annual training prior to the beginning of school.

Parent Notification

The following protocols will be used for school district personnel to notify the student's parent or guardian that the student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and unpaid meal charges are due. The notification procedures may include a repayment schedule, but the school district may not charge any interest or fees in connection with any meals charged;

- a) Send low balance letters
- b) Send negative balance letters
- c) Reminders mailed every Tuesday and Thursday to guardians of students owing \$1 or more

Supporting Family Enrollment in National Free and Reduced Price Meal Program

The following communication procedure shall be used to support eligible families enrolling in the national free and reduced price meal program. Such communication procedures shall also include a process for determining eligibility when a student owes money for five or more meals, wherein the school district shall:

- a) make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified to be eligible for free meals;

- b) make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions included in a school enrollment packet, to reach the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out a meal application; and
- c) require a school or school district to contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with a meal application, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal and offer any other assistance that is appropriate;

Procedures to Decrease Student Distress or Embarrassment

The following represents a clear explanation of procedures designed to decrease student distress or embarrassment, including that the district shall not engage in the following actions or activities:

- a) District employees shall not publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt by any means including, but not limited to, requiring that a student wear a wristband or hand stamp;
- b) District employees shall not require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;
- c) District employees shall not require that a student throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for earlier meals;
- d) District employees shall not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- e) District employees may attempt to collect unpaid school meal fees from a parent or guardian, but shall not use a debt collector, as defined in section eight hundred three of the federal consumer credit protection act, 15 U.S.C. Sec. 1692a;
- f) District employees shall not discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students

Procedures to Handle Unpaid Meal Charges

The following is a clear explanation of the procedures that will be used to handle unpaid meal charges, provided that nothing in this section is intended to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt;

- a) Letters sent home followed-up by individual calls to guardian

Procedures to Enroll in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program

The following are procedures to enroll in the free and reduced price lunch program. At the beginning of each school year, the school district shall provide a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment packet, or if an electronic meal application is used, an explanation of the electronic meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians may request a paper application at no cost;

- a) Provide application materials in the district calendar
- b) Provide application materials on the district website
- c) Provide application materials at each school building

If the District becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-fee meals, the school district shall complete and file an application for the student pursuant to title seven, section 245.6(d) of the code of federal regulations; and 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.