Subject: Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy

I. Purpose

The goal of the North Rose-Wolcott School District Food Service Program 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 than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

However, unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program 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 the North Rose-Wolcott School District Food Service Program in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. The District 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. Policy

Access to Meals

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day that is eligible for reimbursement. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for $.25 and lunch of their choice for $.25 each day. The charged meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, 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/prepaid.

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the District's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, 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/prepaid.

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 has accrued meal charges within five days of the charge and then every week thereafter.

Parent Outreach

- ☐ Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- ☐ Staff 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.
- ☐ Staff 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

- ☐ Staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Staff 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.
- ☐ Staff will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- ☐ Staff will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

Ongoing Eligibility Certification

- Staff will conduct direct certification with the New York Student Identification System (NYSSIS) or using NYSED Roster Upload monthly to maximize free eligibility.

- Staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.

- If the District uses an electronic meal application, it will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.

- The District will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year 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. The District will complete the application using only available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.

- The District will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Prepaid Accounts

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via http://www.myschoolbucks.com/ver2/login/getmain?requestAction=home or with a check payable to North Rose-Wolcott Central School District. Cash or money orders are also accepted. Further details are available on our webpage at www.nrwcs.org. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

To obtain a refund for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. 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 request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the North Rose-Wolcott School District Food Service Program.