



# SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT

82 Monrovia Avenue, Smyrna, Delaware 19977

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## Official Statement

October 5, 2023

At the Smyrna School District, we hold a steadfast commitment to both the education and well-being of our students. With this responsibility in mind, we believe it is imperative to address recent discussions that have emerged on social media. We are dedicated to enhancing our communication through this platform, which includes addressing both accurate and inaccurate information.

First and foremost, we wish to clarify that the outstanding debt within our District exceeds \$16,000 (this accumulated debt has accrued over multiple years and is not exclusive to this academic year).

It is crucial to understand that it is not a new practice that when a student's family has been notified of a past due balance on their meal account, and the amount reaches or exceeds \$20, it is regarded as an obligation. This obligation extends beyond meal accounts and includes other areas such as Chromebook issues, outstanding Emergency Cards, overdue library books, textbooks, sports equipment, and more. Consequently, students with obligations are not permitted to purchase Homecoming tickets. Much like academic performance plays a role in participating in extracurricular activities, maintaining a debt-free meal account is necessary for participation in Homecoming and similar events.

We want to emphasize that no student is denied access to food due to a past-due balance on their meal account. Students with outstanding balances are served the same meals as their peers. Food is not employed as a punitive measure, and our students do not go without nourishment.

If faced with economic hardship, parents have the opportunity to apply for free or reduced-price lunches for their children. The application form was distributed at the beginning of the school year and is also accessible on the Child Nutrition website. This form can be completed and returned to the school or submitted online. For further information, please visit our Child Nutrition website: <https://smyrna.healtheliving.net/>

The Smyrna School District does not discriminate in employment, educational programs, services or activities based on race, color, marital status, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any other protected category or status in accordance with state and federal laws. Inquiries should be directed to the District Superintendent.



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Additionally, the MySchoolBucks platform, available on the same website, offers a convenient method for parents to make payments for their child's lunches.

Every Monday at 10:00 a.m., email notifications are sent to parents to inform them of any past-due balances on their child's meal account. We are committed to assisting families facing financial challenges, and we do not withhold food services from students.

For clarification, the Smyrna School District has not raised the prices for school lunches this year. The sole price adjustments were made to “extras” such as chips, ice cream, and additional entrees, which are not part of the standard cafeteria meals. We understand the financial concerns that families may face, and we want to assure you that our primary goal is to alleviate any unnecessary pressure during these challenging times. We remain committed to providing accessible and nutritious meals to all of our students.

We are sincerely grateful for the support of our community members who have contributed funds to alleviate meal debt, either presently or in the past. We would like to clarify that while there is a GoFundMe page circulating with the District seal, it is not an official District fundraiser. The collection and management of funds are the responsibility of the fundraiser organizer. We cannot guarantee that we will receive the money donated.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Child Nutrition Office cannot disclose direct account information unless the requester is a parent or guardian of the student in question.

It is essential to clarify that the Smyrna School District does not have a District-wide free or reduced lunch program. This is due to not meeting the criteria for a community eligibility provision. This provision allows for free lunches to be provided to *all students* in communities where a certain percentage of households are enrolled in federal food assistance programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). North Smyrna Elementary is the only school in the District that meets the federal guidelines for free meals for all students. As our District does not meet these criteria, it remains the responsibility of individual families to apply for free or reduced-price meals for their students.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we work diligently to provide the best educational experience for our students while also addressing the various challenges that arise. Your continued support is invaluable to us.

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