

Students in the Quakertown Community School District are never denied a lunch.

Impact of PA Act 55 on lunch debt

Historical Data						
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total Enrollment*	5,315	5,290	5,335	5,284	5,191	5087
Total Free/Reduced*	1,436	1,496	1,550	1,636	1,705	1639
Total Lunches Served	411,173	402,545	343,461	373,954	381,572	
Avg. Lunch Served Per Student	77	76	64	71	74	
% Free and Reduced	27.02%	28.28%	29.05%	30.96%	32.85%	
Total Meal Debt	\$1,693.00	\$3,398.00	\$5,014.00	\$12,052.00	\$27,054.00	
Median Household Income						
Up though 2016/17 the debt carried over each year so the \$5,014 is a cumulative number. Starting in 2017/18 the total meal debt is for that year only						
*Data is taken from the October 31st submission in PIMS						

Free and reduced income threshold

To qualify for free lunch, a family of four can earn no more than \$33,475 annually.

To qualify for reduced lunch, a year for a family of four can earn no more than \$47,638 annually.

Cost of lunch in QCSD

Elementary - \$2.50
Middle School - \$3.25
High School - \$3.35
Reduced - 40 cents

School districts in Bucks County and throughout all of Pennsylvania have been dealing with the financial implications of Act 55, passed by the General Assembly in 2017. The legislation has triggered an avalanche of rising red ink, tripling lunch debt across the state.

In the three years prior to Act 55, QCSD lunch debt was a relatively stable \$1,693, \$1,705 and \$1,616. Following the legislation, lunch debt then doubled each year, growing to \$12,000 and \$27,000.

Under the law, districts may not take any actions that could identify students with outstanding meal accounts. Instead, all communications about negative

school lunch accounts are directed to parents or guardians.

Last June, some of those restrictions were loosened:

- ◆ Food service workers can remind high school students about overdue lunch accounts. They can also substitute an alternative meal if a full-pay high school student owes at least \$50.
- ◆ Schools may restrict privileges of students who owe money for school meals as long as those restrictions apply to students who owe money for other school-related purposes, which is the case in QCSD's updated policy.

Debt breakdown

Out of the roughly \$27,000 in debt, \$1,059 is attributed to students on "reduced" payment status (more than \$500 of that was from two students).

Additionally, \$577 is from students on "free" status. Students on free status with a debt means that the debt was incurred before they qualified or applied for free status.

The remaining \$25,000 is from students designated as "full pay."

2018/19 Final Meal Debt Analysis				
Level	Students	Total Debt	Avg. Debt/Student	Debt % of Total
Elementary	216	\$ 10,578.00	\$ 48.97	39.10%
Middle Level	134	\$ 9,342.00	\$ 69.72	34.53%
High School	114	\$ 7,133.00	\$ 62.57	26.37%
Total	464	\$ 27,053.00	\$ 58.30	100.00%
Debt Level	Students	Total Debt	Avg. Debt/Student	Debt % of Total
>\$200	50	\$ 17,496.00	\$ 349.92	64.67%
\$100-\$199	30	\$ 4,073.00	\$ 135.77	15.06%
\$50-\$99	34	\$ 2,467.00	\$ 72.56	9.12%
\$25-\$49	38	\$ 1,376.00	\$ 36.21	5.09%
\$10-\$24	48	\$ 815.00	\$ 16.98	3.01%
<\$10	264	\$ 826.00	\$ 3.13	3.05%
Total	464	\$ 27,053.00	\$ 58.30	100.00%

Policy 617: Student Financial Obligations

Purpose

The Board believes that the schools should help students learn to respect property and develop feelings of pride in community institutions.

The Board recognizes that as a part of the overall school environment, students participate in events, activities or school-sponsored programs in which they may incur financial obligations to the school district. Examples of such financial obligations include, but are not limited to:

1. Library: overdue, damaged, lost, stolen materials
2. Textbooks: lost, stolen, damages to textbooks
3. Classroom materials and school property
4. Athletics: uniforms, equipment, trainer supplies
5. Extracurricular/Field Trips: fundraising monies, uniforms other fees
6. Cafeteria: food services charges and expenses This policy is intended to collect the debt.

Authority

The Board charges each student in the district's schools with responsibility for the proper care of the school property, school supplies and equipment entrusted to the student's use.

Financial obligations/debts include, but is not limited to, instances where a student accrues a debt to the school district through the loss or damage of school district property, materials, and/or equipment, and other financial obligations from receiving good or services. Students and others who damage or deface school property may be prosecuted and punished under the law. Parents/Guardians shall be held accountable for the actions of their child.

The Board directs that whenever a student has incurred financial debt to the district, the steps as outlined below be taken.

1. Proper written notice will be provided to the

parent/guardian regarding the amount, type of debt, payment methods, and payment timeframe. The building principal shall meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the debt.

2. The District will allow thirty (30) days for full payment.
3. If full payment is not received within thirty (30) days, the student will be subject to the consequences appointed by the Board of School Directors until the satisfactory completion of all obligations is attained.
4. Consequences shall include, but are not limited to:
 - ◆ 4.1. Not permitting the student to attend class trips, school dances, school events or other similar extracurricular activities.
 - ◆ ~~4.2. Withholding a student's report card, transcripts, when deemed necessary.~~
 - ◆ 4.3. Not permitting the student to participate in graduation ceremonies.
 - ◆ 4.4. Refer the delinquent financial debt obligation to a collection agency, when debts exceed \$1,000.

The District reserves the right to consider mitigating circumstances before implementing consequences. However, for willful damage to school property, no exceptions will be considered.

Every attempt to obtain full payment shall be made prior to matriculation of the student to the next grade level however, student debt shall continue with the student through graduation.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and disseminate administrative regulations to implement this policy. In cases where a student has outstanding debt to the district, proper and timely notice must be given to the student and his/her parents/guardians prior to the implementation of any consequences.