

## **Lunches seized from kids in debt at Salt Lake City elementary**

Up to 40 kids at Uintah Elementary in Salt Lake City picked up their lunches Tuesday, then watched as the meals were taken and thrown away because of outstanding balances on their accounts — a move that shocked and angered parents.

"It was pretty traumatic and humiliating," said Erica Lukes, whose 11-year-old daughter had her cafeteria lunch taken from her as she stood in line Tuesday at Uintah Elementary School

Lukes said as far as she knew, she was all paid up. "I think it's despicable," she said. "These are young children that shouldn't be punished or humiliated for something the parents obviously need to clear up."

Jason Olsen, a Salt Lake City District spokesman, said the district's child-nutrition department became aware that Uintah had a large number of students who owed money for lunches.

As a result, the child-nutrition manager visited the school and decided to withhold lunches to deal with the issue, he said.

But cafeteria workers weren't able to see which children owed money until they had already received lunches, Olsen explained.

The workers then took those lunches from the students and threw them away, he said, because once food is served to one student it can't be served to another.

Children whose lunches were taken were given milk and fruit instead.

Olsen said school officials told the district that their staffers typically tell students about any balances as they go through the lunch line and send home notifications to parents each week.

The district attempted to contact parents with balances via phone Monday and Tuesday, Olsen said, but weren't able to reach them all before the child-nutrition manager decided to take away the students' lunches.

<http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/57468293-78/lunches-olsen-students-district.html.csp>