

The school system will provide free meals and reduced price meals to eligible students in the schools.

The principal shall make applications for free or reduced price meals readily available to parents or guardians and shall accept completed applications at any time during the school year.

In accordance with the guidelines for participation in these programs, and in accordance with the wishes of the Watauga County Board of Education (the “board”), no student who meets the criteria for eligibility for free and reduced meal benefits will be denied a free lunch, milk, or other food simply because the proper application has not been received from his or her parent or guardian. The principal may complete an application, based on the best household size and income information available, for a student known to be needy if the parent or guardian fails to apply. The source of the information must be noted on the application. The principal shall ensure that school rules and procedures are implemented in ways that do not impede eligible students from participating fully in these programs.

The information provided on each application is confidential. Employees with access to this confidential information must make reasonable efforts to maintain the anonymity of students participating in the free or reduced price meal program.

Each year, the superintendent or designee shall ensure that the school system has met all federal requirements to verify the eligibility of applicants. When school personnel become aware of information that raises concerns about the integrity of an application, the superintendent or designee must verify the questionable information by following the verification for cause procedures set forth in federal regulations.

The superintendent is authorized to apply for community eligibility as an alternative to collecting individual household applications for free and reduced price meals for any school or group of schools that meet the eligibility requirements for community eligibility established by federal law. In schools approved for participation pursuant to the community eligibility requirements, the board will serve free lunches and breakfasts to all students in the school without regard to income and will cover with non-federal funds any costs of providing the free meals above the amounts provided by federal assistance. Participating schools will not collect free and reduced price applications from households.

The superintendent shall establish procedures that conform to state and federal requirements regarding participation in programs for free and reduced priced meal benefits.

Legal References: Child Nutrition Act of 1966, 42 U.S.C. 1771 *et seq.*; 7 C.F.R. Parts 210, 215, 220, and 245; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, P.L. 111-296; National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. 1751, *et seq.*; G.S. 115C-263, -264

Cross References: Goals of School Nutrition Services (policy 6200)

Adopted: March 9, 2015