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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

April 1, 2025

(X) Action Required
Due date: Varies
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 027-25 CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School District Food Service Supervisors
Administrators of Select Private Schools
FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction
RE: Meals for Washington Students
CONTACT: Child Nutrition Services Program Specialists

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PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

The Washington State Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 1238 \(2023\)](#): Providing Free School Meals for All during the 2023 legislative session amending the [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.235](#). This bulletin summarizes the requirements of RCW 28A.235.135, including impacts to operation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

MEALS FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS

RCW 28A.235.135 requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to provide breakfast and lunch at no cost to students enrolled at elementary schools where 30% or more of enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, based on October 2024 [Area Eligibility Data](#). OSPI will notify LEAs with impacted schools. A list of required elementary schools for school year [2025–26](#) is posted on the [OSPI Meals for Washington Students webpage](#).

“Elementary schools” are defined as schools that serve students in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade and/or fourth grade. Regardless of other grade levels served in the school, any school that serves students in any of the above grades qualifies as an “elementary school.” Once a school qualifies, all students must be offered breakfast and lunch free of charge. For example, in a qualifying school that serves students in grades K-8, all students, at all grade levels, must have access to meals at no cost. RCW 28A.235.135 requirements also apply to charter schools and state-tribal education compact schools.

Schools providing breakfast and lunch at no cost to students under this requirement must claim meals by eligibility category (free, reduced-price, or paid). Meals served to students in the reduced-price or paid category will receive supplemental funding to provide reimbursement equal to the USDA free rate.

RCW 28A.235.135 does *not* supersede [RCW 28A.235.300](#) which requires the operation of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) at schools with an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of 40% or greater. Schools with an ISP of 40% or greater must continue to apply for CEP as required by legislation and may not end their CEP cycle early.

Provision 2

Schools operating under RCW 28A.235.135 are encouraged to begin a Provision 2 cycle. Provision 2 is a meal service option approved on a 4-year cycle with the first year being a base year. Schools that maintain at least a 30% free and reduced-price percentage during the base year will remain eligible in years 2-4 of the cycle. During the base year, the district collects Child Nutrition Eligibility & Education Benefit (CNEEB) Applications and claims according to approved eligibility status while still providing meals at no cost to all students. The average claiming percentages for free, reduced price, and paid meals from the base year are then calculated and applied to years 2-4 of the cycle. LEAs should contact their assigned Program Specialist by **September 1, 2025**, to begin a Provision 2 Base Year.

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

LEAs providing breakfast and lunch at no cost under RCW 28A.235.135, must continue to follow all NSLP and SBP requirements, including the following:

Child Nutrition Eligibility & Education Benefit Applications

LEAs must distribute and collect [the Child Nutrition Eligibility & Education Benefit Application](#).

The CNEEB Application may qualify households for: meal benefits, Summer EBT benefits, reduced fees for other programs and activities, and help secure educational funding for the LEA.

Local Education Agencies must also distribute *Letters to Households* to families each school year after July 1. These materials inform families of the meal programs available to students.

Direct Certification

Direct Certification is the process LEAs use to certify categorically eligible children for free or reduced-price meals without further application. Students may be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals based on participation in assistance programs, including but not limited to Basic Food and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). LEAs are required to perform direct certification at least monthly per [RCW 28A.235.280](#).

Notification of Eligibility Determination

Local Education Agencies must provide written notification to households of their eligibility status. Households with children who are approved or denied for free or reduced-price benefits must be notified through mail or email.

Verification

Verification of applications remains an annual requirement under HB 1238, unless a school is in a Provision 2 non-base year. Verification is the confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and is only required for eligibility approved through the application process (not directly certified students).

Information about CNEEB Application materials, including Letter to Household, Notice of Eligibility, and Verification resources for schools operating Meals for Washington Students can be found on the [webpage](#).

Paid Lunch Prices

Schools operating under HB 1238 do not need to establish student lunch prices and should not include meal counts from these schools in the [Paid Lunch Equity Tool](#) calculation. Prices for

adult meals must continue to be set in accordance with requirements outlined in the [Adult Meal Prices Reference Sheet](#).

IMPACTS TO OTHER PROGRAMS

Learning Assistance Program (LAP): Temporary Stability Factor

A temporary stability factor for school year 2023–24 through school year 2025–26 is in place to ensure LEAs and schools do not lose important LAP funding by providing meals at no cost. For LEAs offering meals at no cost in at least one of their schools under HB 1238, LAP Base funding will be calculated on the highest Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility Status or Low Income (FRPL) percentage for the school years 2019–20 through 2023–24. For LAP High Poverty funding, schools offering meals at no cost under HB 1238 and were identified as eligible for this funding for any year between 2019–20 and 2022–23 or had a FRPL percentage of 50% or more for 2024–25 will qualify for this funding for 2025–26.

National Board-Certified Teaching Bonus: Temporary Stability Factor

A temporary stability factor is also in place to ensure schools qualifying as 'High Poverty Schools' in school year 2022–23 maintain their status for school year 2024–25 and 2025–26 National Board-Certified Teacher bonuses when providing meals at no cost.

Nothing prevents a school or LEA from increasing their FRPL status while providing meals at no cost. Diligent CNEEB application collection and direct certification downloads are key to increasing these percentages.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin please contact your assigned program specialist or call the OSPI TTY number at 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

Tennille Jeffries-Simmons
Chief of Staff

Leanne Eko
Chief Nutrition Officer
Child Nutrition Services

CR:ln

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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