

POLICY FOR DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY
FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

1. Criteria for determining eligibility of children for free or reduced price meals shall be:
 - a. Children from families that receive public assistance from any federal, county, or local welfare program such as the Food Stamp Program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and children from families with comparable income levels will be eligible for a free meal.
 - b. Children from families with income below the level of the family size-income scale established by the Department of Education.
 - c. Children who, in the judgment of appropriate school officials, have unmet nutritional needs. Such factors as number of children in the family, number of children attending school, temporary family emergencies, or local community emergencies shall be given consideration.
2. The school district will provide application forms for free and reduced price meals to all parents and to any interested community groups and agencies who request them. Eligibility for a free or reduced price lunch must be determined from the information provided on the application form. (For example, if a family stated on the application that it receives any form of Public Assistance or that its take-home pay falls below the level for its family size as shown on the statewide scale, its children are eligible.) Within seven days of receipt of an application, a decision regarding eligibility must be made, and parents are to be notified by mail in writing of that decision. If a positive determination is made, the child must begin to receive the free or reduced price meal immediately.
3. If a child is found to be ineligible on the basis of the information provided on the application, a family is permitted to appeal the decision under the hearing procedures outlined below.

If at any time a school district wishes to challenge a child's eligibility for a free or reduced price meal, the opportunity for a hearing must also be extended to parents. In the event of such a challenge by the school district, the family shall have an opportunity, and a reasonable period in advance of the hearing, to review the information on which the challenge is based, and shall be informed of the source of the information.

However, any child who is eligible for a free or reduced price meal, based on the information on the application, must continue to receive a free or reduced price meal for the duration of any hearing proceedings.

4. At a minimum, the hearing procedure shall provide:
 - a. A simple, publicly-announced method for a family to make an oral or a written request for a hearing;
 - b. Assurance that a family which has requested an appeal will be informed of its rights and responsibilities a reasonable time in advance of the hearing;
 - c. An opportunity for the family to have the aid of others, including an attorney, in presenting its appeal;
 - d. That the hearing requested shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience to the family;
 - e. That the hearing shall be conducted by, and the decision made by, a hearing official who did not participate in making the decision under appeal;
 - f. That the family requesting the hearing shall be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official;
 - g. That a written summary record shall be maintained with respect to each hearing requested which shall include the basis of the appeal, the information used by the hearing official in arriving at his decision, and a copy of the notification of the decision of hearing official to the family;
 - h. A copy of these materials shall be submitted to the Department of Education for review within 10 days after the final decision has been rendered.
5. Appeals can be made to the Secretary-Business Administrator, Nutley Board of Education, 149 Chestnut Street, Nutley, New Jersey.
6. The Secretary-Business Administrator has been authorized to set up a system for the accounting of free or reduced price meals that will protect the anonymity of the children receiving a free or reduced price lunch.
7. The names of children determined to be eligible for reduced price or free meals will not be published, posted or announced in any manner.
8. Children receiving reduced price or free meals will not be required as a condition of receiving such meals:
 - a. To use a separate lunchroom, entrance, or serving line;
 - b. To eat a different meal, or at a different time, or use a different medium of exchange than paying children; or
 - c. To work for their meals. (Children may work in the lunchroom, but not as a condition of receiving the free or reduced price meal).

9. The determining official will use the income scale established by the State Department of Education to determine the eligibility of children for reduced price or free meals. The determining official shall also consider such factors as:
 - a. Number of children in the family attending school
 - b. Illness in the family
 - c. Unusual expenses
 - d. Seasonal unemployment
10. Public announcement, including the family size-income scale, information on how eligible families can make application for free or reduced price meals, and appeal procedures, will be made twice during a school year, no later than September 30th and again in January, by both following methods:
 - a. A notice and application sent home to each parent either by mail or via the child; and
 - b. An article or announcement in a local newspaper that has wide coverage.
11. The school will notify local governmental welfare and other major charitable agencies of this policy.
12. The school will keep on file for the duration of the current school year a record of any applications and appeals made and the action taken by the designated official.
13. The following supporting data will be sent to the State Department of Education:
 - a. A copy of the application form used;
 - b. A copy of the published news release used in the informational media;
 - c. A copy of the notice sent home to parents; and
 - d. A listing of local welfare and private charitable agencies notified of this policy.

Policy Adopted:
September 23, 1970