

2023 NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL MEALS

NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Kids can't learn if they are hungry. School meals are a powerful tool for increasing academic achievement and fighting child hunger. This profile provides a snapshot of how the 115 traditional public school districts in North Carolina are providing access to healthy school meals for students in the state. Use this profile to celebrate successes and identify opportunities to continue the fight against child hunger.

Overview of the Program

- The **National School Lunch Program** and **School Breakfast Program** provide healthy meals that meet federal nutrition guidelines to students.
- School meals have many benefits including improved academic performance and attendance, fewer behavioral issues, reduced food insecurity, and better diet quality.¹
- All students can participate in school meals. Students can qualify for **free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals** if their family's income is below 130% or between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level, respectively.

October 2022 Facts



1,432,584
students
attended
schools in the
state that
served meals



2,447
schools
served
school
meals



887,315 (62%)
students in the
state were
eligible for FRP
meals.



924 (38%) of schools
serving meals participated
in the **community
eligibility provision (CEP)**,
which allows schools in
low-income areas to serve
breakfast and lunch to all
students at no cost.

October 2022 School Meal Participation

	School Breakfast	School Lunch
All Students	398,467 (28%)	683,821 (48%)
FRP Students	328,111 (37%)	530,175 (60%)

Thank You
Nutrition
Staff and
Educators!

For more information visit: CarolinaHungerInitiative.org/Profiles

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School Meals During the 2022-23 School Year

- Waivers from the United States Department of Agriculture that allowed meals to be served at no cost to all students during the COVID-19 pandemic expired in June 2022, requiring school districts to return to previous methods for determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, which may include collecting household applications.
- State legislation in North Carolina provides funding for students eligible for reduced-price meals to receive free school meals during the 2022-23 school year. The funding for breakfast will continue in future school years, but additional policy action is needed to continue the funding for lunch.

Number of FRP eligible children who participate in school breakfast for every 100 participating in school lunch

Statewide Average	FRAC Goal
62	70

[The Breakfast Gap]

- Both breakfast and lunch are critical for learning and health, yet participation in school breakfast is generally lower than lunch.
- The **breakfast gap** is the number of FRP eligible students who participate in school lunch who do not participate in school breakfast. There was a breakfast gap of **201,820** students.
- The number of FRP eligible children who participate in school breakfast for every 100 participating in school lunch is used nationally by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) as an indicator of how much of the need for school breakfast is being met.

Innovative Breakfast Models

Students may have difficulty participating in school breakfast when it is served before school in the cafeteria. Many schools across North Carolina use innovative breakfast serving models such as **breakfast in the classroom, second chance breakfast, or grab n' go breakfast** to make it easier for students to participate. Learn more about breakfast serving models here: bit.ly/3AI5lnp