

Student October Count and Lunch Eligibility

Best Practices for Maximizing District Funding

Student October Count is the official student membership headcount for all Colorado public school districts. When students are enrolled, scheduled and in attendance as of the pupil enrollment count day, the district receives an average of \$8,123 in per pupil funding. In addition, students reported as free lunch eligible account for an average of \$1,226 each in additional At-Risk funding. This resource is designed to provide best practices for ensuring data is accurate and eligible free lunch students are maximized during the reporting period.



COLORADO
Department of Education

Getting Started

- Know the pupil enrollment count date (aka October 1 Count)
 - Was an alternative pupil enrollment count date requested?
 - Was a variance waiver requested?
- Know which schools:
 - Participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
 - Participate in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2; Know base years for these schools
 - Do not participate in the NSLP (for example: charter schools, online schools, etc.)
- Ensure direct certification is conducted as many times as possible from July 1 through the pupil enrollment count date for **all** students (whether at a participating school or not)
 - Have a process to include students in non-participating schools (such as charters, online schools, etc.)
- Ensure nutrition point of sale system is syncing properly with your district's student information system (SIS)

Data Validation

- At **district *and* school** level:
 - Verify all students on the direct certification match-list between July 1 and the pupil enrollment count date are reported as free lunch eligible
 - Verify all students who have a free lunch eligibility (via application or other source – Migrant, Homeless, Runaway, Foster, Head Start, School Official Application) between July 1 and the pupil enrollment count date are reported as free lunch (if included in the district's October Count)
 - Compare current year free lunch eligibility percentage to prior year percentage Please see "District Summary" of Pupil Counts Cognos Report.
 - Determine if changes are reasonable; identify contributing factors
 - Did any schools not report any type of eligibility?
 - Compare current year free **and** reduced lunch percentage to prior year percentage Please see "District Summary" of Pupil Counts Cognos Report.
 - Determine if changes are reasonable; identify contributing factors

What is Cognos?

Cognos is a system accessed through the Data Pipeline for viewing customized reports where the user can check on various data that their Local Education Agency (LEA) has submitted.

How can it be helpful?

The Cognos reports can help LEAs validate the accuracy of the data that has been submitted.

Helpful Cognos Reports

Go to the Student October Count link and then to the report entitled "District Summary of Pupil Counts," which contains free and reduced lunch numbers. The LEA might also want to review the report entitled "Snapshot Records Excluded Due to Profile Errors." The report entitled "Students Excluded from Student October Snapshot" might also be helpful. Another place to find helpful Cognos reports for errors is to go to the Student Profile link. From there go to the report Student Demographic Error Detail Report." There is also a report called "Student Demographics Error Summary Report."



Community Eligibility Provision/Provision 2 Considerations

- At the student level:
 - Any eligibility determination made (i.e. free, reduced-price) can be used all 4 years of the provision cycle (documentation must be maintained) for the Student October Count date submission
 - Cycle resets require new eligibility documentation to be obtained and must be reported accordingly for the count date
 - If a student is determined free lunch eligible, this will remain for the entirety of the provision cycle regardless of any documentation stating otherwise. Similarly, if documentation is received between July 1 and the pupil enrollment count date of the current school year substantiating free lunch eligibility for a previously reported reduced-price or paid student, the student should be reported as free.

Resources and Annual Process

- Ensure software is updated for new school year
 - Use the Start of Year Checklist for free and reduced-price software systems
- Ensure systems are importing/exporting data correctly and notification process in place when imports/exports fail
- Attend available in-person trainings, online trainings and webinars on this topic
 - Visit School Nutrition professional development webpage
 - Visit School Auditing Office webpage
- Use the At-Risk/Free Lunch Audit Guide for guidance on reporting

Where can I learn more?

- At-Risk/Free Lunch Count Webpage:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/auditunit_atrisk_freeandreduced
- School Meal Eligibility Webpage: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/schoolmealeligibility>
- Data Pipeline/Student October Count Webpage:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/DataPipeline/snap_studentOctober.asp