



Middle School and High School Poverty Adjustment Factor

Background

The Federal National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program provides school meals to the children most in need. The eligibility criteria is 130 percent of the poverty income level for free meals and 185 percent for reduced-price meals. The free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) eligibility rate is used to determine state resource allocations for lower class sizes in high-poverty schools and for the Learning Assistance Program (LAP). The Learning Assistance Program is a state-funded allocation for supplemental instruction and services for underachieving students.

The percent of students that have applied and are eligible for free and reduced price meals declines as the grade level increases.

Enabling legislation

[2011-13 Operating Budget - 2ESHB 1087 Section 515 \(5\)](#)

“The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall research and recommend options for an adjustment factor for middle school and high school free and reduced price lunch eligibility reporting rates pursuant to RCW 28A.150.260(12)(a), and submit a report to the fiscal committees of the legislature by June 1, 2012.”

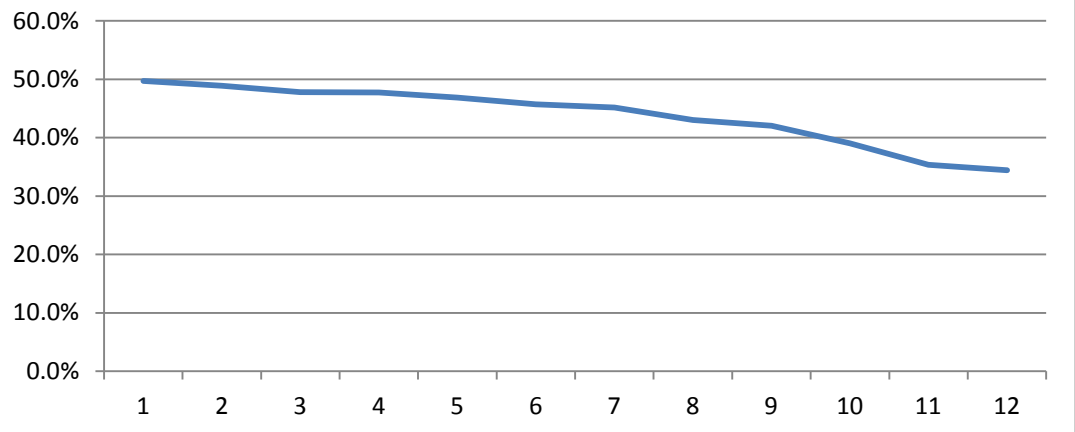
Randy Dorn
Superintendent
of Public
Instruction

OSPI
Old Capitol
Building
PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA
98504-7200



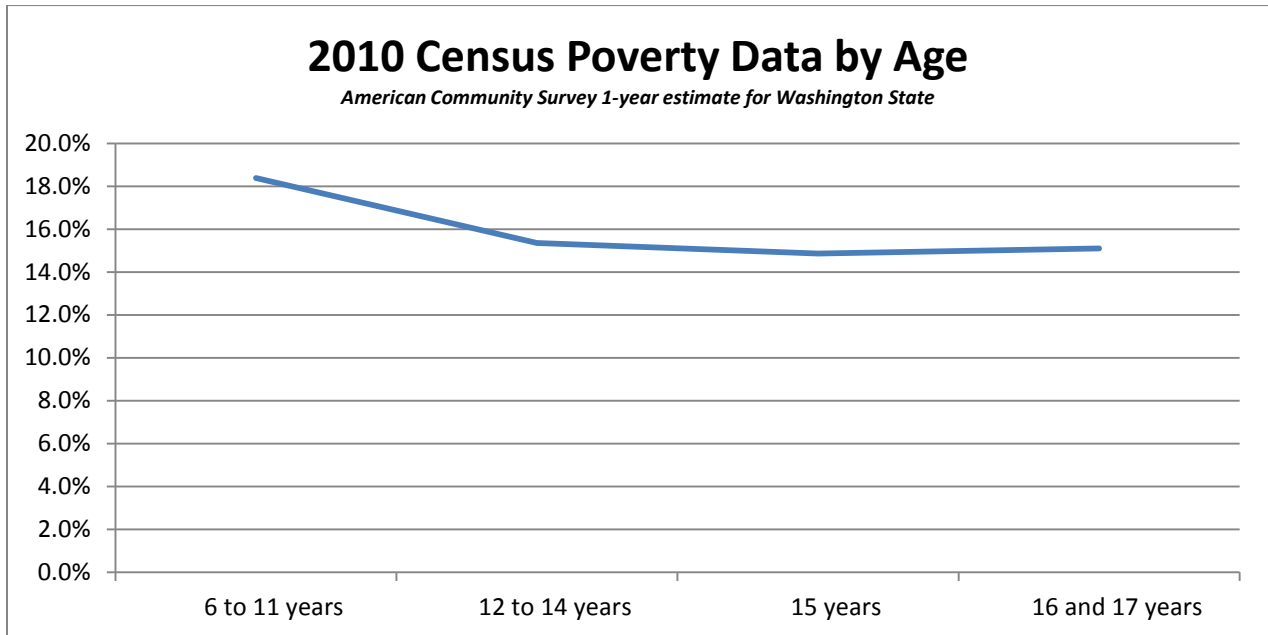
Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch by Grade

As of October 31, 2011 - reported in CEDARS



As displayed in the previous chart, the percent of students that apply and are eligible for free and reduced price meals drops off during the middle school grades (7-8) and even more significantly in the high school grades (9-12).

The Census poverty data for the Washington State population does not follow the same trend, as displayed in the next chart. (Please note that the age groupings are different and the percentages are based on 100 percent of poverty level.)



The United States Department of Agriculture found that the perceived stigma of school meal benefits is a large barrier affecting application to the program for older students.ⁱ The USDA findings are supported by the Census poverty data. Therefore, the FRPL rates may not be the most reliable measure of poverty for middle and high school grades and the reporting rates need to be adjusted.

Options

Option 1 - Elementary School FRPL Rate

The federal government allows for an adjustment of middle and high school underreporting of FRPL through the “feeder pattern” concept in identification of Title I eligible schools. The middle and high school poverty rates are based on the average poverty rate of the elementary schools that feed into the middle or high school.

Due to the fact that the state allocations are based on FRPL rates at the district level, the state could base the allocations on the FRPL rate for elementary students, grades K-6. For the 2011-12 school year, this increases the statewide average from 44 percent to 47.6 percent. See Appendix B for information about the calculation and the adjustment factor.

Option 2 – Grade 6 Level FRPL Rate

The Census poverty data shows that the poverty rate levels off at ages 12 to 14 (grades 7-8). In order to mirror the poverty trend, an option would be to use the district level poverty level for grade 6 as the percentage for middle and high school grades. For the 2011-12 school year, this increases the statewide average from 44 percent to 46.7 percent. See Appendix C for information about the calculation and the adjustment factor.

Appendix A – Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch by Grade (2011-12 School Year)

Grade	Students Receiving FRPL	Students Enrolled	% Receiving FRPL	Prototypical School FRPL Rate
Half Day K	15,994	42,359	37.8%	47.6%
Full Day K	20,692	35,869	57.7%	
Grade 1	39,340	79,167	49.7%	
Grade 2	38,361	78,474	48.9%	
Grade 3	37,232	77,950	47.8%	
Grade 4	36,828	77,126	47.8%	
Grade 5	36,989	78,926	46.9%	
Grade 6	36,210	79,234	45.7%	44.1%
Grade 7	35,676	79,027	45.1%	
Grade 8	33,952	78,956	43.0%	37.7%
Grade 9	35,003	83,279	42.0%	
Grade 10	31,361	80,361	39.0%	
Grade 11	28,053	79,324	35.4%	
Grade 12	28,932	84,069	34.4%	
K-12 Total	454,623	1,034,121	44.0%	

FRPL Application Data for October 31, 2011 as reported in CEDARS on May 21, 2012

Appendix B – Elementary School Level FRPL Rate Calculation

Grade	Students Receiving FRPL	Students Enrolled	% Receiving FRPL	Prototypical School FRPL Rate	FTE Adjustment Factor	Prototypical School FTE Factor
Half Day K	15,994	42,359	37.8%	47.6%		1.00
Full Day K	20,692	35,869	57.7%			
Grade 1	39,340	79,167	49.7%			
Grade 2	38,361	78,474	48.9%			
Grade 3	37,232	77,950	47.8%			
Grade 4	36,828	77,126	47.8%			
Grade 5	36,989	78,926	46.9%			
Grade 6	36,210	79,234	45.7%			
Grade 7	37,656	79,027	47.6%	47.6%	1.06	1.08
Grade 8	37,622	78,956	47.6%		1.11	
Grade 9	39,682	83,279	47.6%	47.6%	1.13	1.26
Grade 10	38,292	80,361	47.6%		1.22	
Grade 11	37,798	79,324	47.6%		1.35	
Grade 12	40,058	84,069	47.6%		1.38	
K-12 Total	492,754	1,034,121	47.6%			

The grade level enrollment did not change, the students receiving FRPL were derived for Grades 7-12 using the elementary school FRPL rate.

The FTE Adjustment Factor is calculated by dividing the new projected number of student receiving FRPL by the old number (Appendix A).

Appendix C – Grade 6 Level FRPL Rate Calculation

Grade	Students Receiving FRPL	Students Enrolled	% Receiving FRPL	Prototypical School FRPL Rate	FTE Adjustment Factor	Prototypical School FTE Factor
Half Day K	15,994	42,359	37.8%	47.6%		1.00
Full Day K	20,692	35,869	57.7%			
Grade 1	39,340	79,167	49.7%			
Grade 2	38,361	78,474	48.9%			
Grade 3	37,232	77,950	47.8%			
Grade 4	36,828	77,126	47.8%			
Grade 5	36,989	78,926	46.9%			
Grade 6	36,210	79,234	45.7%			
Grade 7	36,115	79,027	45.7%	45.7%	1.01	1.04
Grade 8	36,083	78,956	45.7%		1.06	
Grade 9	38,059	83,279	45.7%	45.7%	1.09	1.21
Grade 10	36,725	80,361	45.7%		1.17	
Grade 11	36,251	79,324	45.7%		1.29	
Grade 12	38,420	84,069	45.7%		1.33	
K-12 Total	483,299	1,034,121	46.7%			

The grade level enrollment did not change, the students receiving FRPL were derived for Grades 7-12 using the Grade 6 FRPL rate.

The FTE Adjustment Factor is calculated by dividing the new projected number of student receiving FRPL by the old number (Appendix A).

ⁱ Glantz, F., et al., *School Lunch Eligible Non-Participants*, report by Abt Associates Inc., for USDA, FNS, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, December 1994. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/EligNonPart-PtI.pdf>

For more information about the contents
of this document, please contact:

Kelci Karl-Robinson, OSPI

E-mail: Kelcikarl-robinson@K12.wa.us

Phone: 360-725-6019

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Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200