

2270 RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education recognizes that religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal conviction rather than governmental authority and the students of this district are protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and by Article I, Paragraph 4 of the New Jersey State Constitution from the establishment of religion in the schools. The First Amendment requires public school officials to show neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religious expression such as prayer.

As a condition of receiving Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) funds, the Board of Education must annually certify in writing to the New Jersey Department of Education that no Board policy prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary and secondary schools, as detailed in the United States Department of Education's Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (USDOE Guidance). The Board must provide this certification to the New Jersey Department of Education by October 1 of each year during which the Board participates in an ESEA program. The USDOE Guidance provides information on the current state of the law concerning constitutionally protected prayer and religious expression in public elementary and secondary schools.

The following activities as outlined in the USDOE Guidance will be permitted upon applying the governing constitutional principles in particular public school contexts related to prayer: prayer and religious exercise during non-instructional time; organized prayer groups and activities; teachers, administrators, and other school employees; moments of silence; accommodations of prayer and religious exercise during instructional time; student assemblies and noncurricular events; prayer at graduation; and/or baccalaureate ceremonies.

The following activities as outlined in the USDOE Guidance will be permitted upon applying constitutional principles regarding religious expression other than prayer in particular public school contexts: religious literature; teaching about religion; student dress codes and policies; religious expression in class assignments and homework; and/or excusals for religious activities.

In addition to the constitutional principles outlined in this Policy and the USDOE Guidance, public schools may also be subject to requirements under Federal and State laws relevant to prayer and religious expression. Such Federal and State laws may not; however, obviate or conflict with a public school's Federal

constitutional obligations described in the USDOE Guidance. The Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 4071, is designed to ensure that student religious activities are accorded the same access to Federally funded public secondary school facilities as are student secular activities.

The United States Department of Justice has developed guidance for interpreting the Equal Access Act's requirements outlined in the USDOE Guidance in the area of general provisions, prayer service and worship exercises, means of publicized meetings, lunch-time and recess, and leadership of religious student groups.

Any issues regarding prayer and religious expression in the schools, the USDOE Guidance, and the provisions of this Policy shall be referred to the Superintendent of Schools who may consult with the Board Attorney.

U.S. Const. Amend. 1

The Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 4071

U.S. Department of Education - Guidance on Constitutionally Protected

Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools –

20 May 15, 2023

N.J. Const. (1947) Art. 1, para. 4

N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.6 et seq.; 18A:36-16

Adopted:

5111 ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT STUDENTS

The Board of Education shall admit to its schools, free of charge, persons over five and under twenty years of age, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1, or such younger or older student as is otherwise entitled by law to a free public education.

Eligibility to Attend School – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.1, 3.2, and 3.3

The Board shall admit students eligible to attend school free of charge that are domiciled within the district as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.1 and Regulation 5111 – Section B.

The Board shall also admit any student that is kept in the home of a person other than the student's parent or guardian, and the person is domiciled in the school district and is supporting the student without remuneration as if the student were their own child in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.2 and Regulation 5111 – Section C. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.c., any person who fraudulently allows a child of another person to use their residence and is not the primary financial supporter of that child and any person who fraudulently claims to have given up custody of their child to a person in another district commits a disorderly persons offense.

A student is eligible to attend school in this school district free of charge pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.d. if the student's parent or guardian temporarily resides within the school district and elects to have the student attend the school district of temporary residence, notwithstanding the existence of a domicile elsewhere pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.1(a)4. and Regulation 5111 – Section B.

A student is eligible to attend this school district free of charge in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.2 and Regulation 5111 – Section C.:

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1 or any other law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, a student who moves out of the school district as a result of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other family crises shall be permitted to remain enrolled in the school district for the remainder of the school year pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.1 and in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.2(h) and Regulation 5111 – Section C.

Except as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.3(b)1., immigration/visa status shall not affect eligibility to attend school. Any student who is domiciled in ~~and~~ the school district or otherwise eligible to attend school in the school district pursuant to

N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.2 shall be enrolled without regard to, or inquiry concerning, immigration status. A student's immigration/visa status and their eligibility to attend school shall be in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.3(b) and Regulation 5111 – Section D.

Proof of Eligibility – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4

The Board of Education shall accept a combination of forms of documentation from persons attempting to demonstrate a student's eligibility for enrollment in the school district in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:22-3.4 and Regulation 5111 – Section E.

In the case of a dispute between the school district and the parent of a student in regard to the student's eligibility to enroll in the school district or to remain enrolled in the school district pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1, the school district may request from the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (NJMVC) the parent or guardian's name and address for use in verifying a student's eligibility for enrollment in the school district in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.3.

Registration Forms and Procedures for Initial Assessment – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.1

Registration and procedures for initial determinations of eligibility will be in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.1 and Regulation 5111 – Section F.

Initial eligibility determinations shall be made upon presentation of an enrollment application, and enrollment shall take place immediately except in cases of clear, uncontested denials. Enrollment shall take place immediately when an applicant has provided incomplete, unclear, or questionable information, but the applicant shall be notified that the student will be removed from the school district if defects in the application are not corrected, or an appeal is not filed, in accordance with subsequent notice to be provided pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.2 and Regulation 5111 – Section F.

When a student appears ineligible based on the information provided in the initial application, the school district shall issue a preliminary written notice of ineligibility, including an explanation of the right to appeal to the Commissioner of Education in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.1(c)2. and Regulation 5111 – Section F

When enrollment is denied and no intent to appeal is indicated, applicants shall be advised they shall comply with compulsory education laws in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.1(d) and Regulation 5111 – Section F. Enrollment or attendance at the school shall not be conditioned or denied pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.1(e) through (i) and Regulation 5111 – Section F.

Notices of Ineligibility – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.2

When a student is found ineligible to attend the school district pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:22 or the student's initial application is found to be deficient upon subsequent review or investigation, the school district immediately shall provide to the applicant notice that is consistent with Commissioner-provided sample form(s) and meets requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.2 and Regulation 5111 – Section G.

Removal of Currently Enrolled Students – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.3

Nothing in N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4, this Policy, and Regulation 5111 shall preclude the Board of Education from identifying through further investigation or periodic requests for revalidation of eligibility, students enrolled in the school district who may be ineligible for continued attendance due to error in initial assessment, changed circumstances, or newly discovered information pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.3 and Regulation 5111 – Section H.

When a student who is enrolled and attending school based on an initial eligibility determination is later determined to be ineligible for continued attendance, the Superintendent may apply to the Board for the student's removal in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:22-4.3 and Regulation 5111 – Section H
Appeal to the Commissioner – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-5.1

An applicant may appeal to the Commissioner of Education the school district's determination that a student is ineligible to attend its schools in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-5.1 and Regulation 5111 – Section I. \

Assessment and Calculation of Tuition – N.J.A.C. 6A:22-6

If no appeal to the Commissioner is filed by the parent, guardian, adult student, or district resident keeping an affidavit student following notice of an ineligibility determination, the Board of Education may assess tuition; for up to one year of a student's ineligible attendance, including the twenty-one day period provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1 for appeal to the Commissioner in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-6.1 and Regulation 5111 – Section J. Tuition will be assessed and calculated in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-6.3 and Regulation 5111 – Section J.

If an appeal to the Commissioner is filed by the parent, guardian, adult student, or district resident keeping an affidavit student and the petitioner does not sustain the burden of demonstrating the student's right to attend the school district, or the petitioner withdraws the appeal, fails to prosecute, or abandons the appeal by any means other than settlement agreeing to waive or reduce tuition, the Commissioner may assess tuition in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:22-6.2(a) and Regulation 5111 – Section J. Upon the Commissioner's finding

that an appeal has been abandoned, the Board of Education may remove the student from school and seek tuition in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:22-6.2(a)1. and Regulation 5111 – Section J.

Nonresident Students – N.J.S.A. 18A:38-3.a.

Any person not resident in the school district, if eligible except for residence, may be admitted to the schools of the district with the consent of the Board of Education upon such terms, and with payment of tuition, as the Board prescribes. The Board of Education, with the approval of the Executive County Superintendent, shall establish a uniform tuition amount for any nonresident student admitted to the schools of the district pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-3.a. The continued enrollment of any nonresident student shall be contingent upon the student's maintenance of good standards of citizenship, and discipline, attendance, and payment of tuition.

Children Who Anticipate Moving to or from the District

A nonresident student whose parent or guardian anticipates school district residency and has entered a contract to buy, build, or rent a residence in this school district may be enrolled with payment of a tuition rate approved by the Executive County Superintendent for a period of time not greater than 6 weeks prior to the anticipated date of residency.

Students whose parent or guardian have moved away from the school district on or after 1/1 and twelfth grade students whose parent or guardian have moved away from the school district on or after 1/1-with payment of a tuition rate as approved by the Executive County Superintendent.

Children of District Employees

A child of a Board of Education employee who does not reside in this school district may be admitted to school in this district without the payment of tuition for the child if the child's educational program can be provided in a school in the district. If the Board requires the payment of tuition, the Board shall establish and approve a tuition rate for the child of a Board employee upon a request from the employee for their child to attend a school in the district. The tuition amount for the student is not required to follow the amount established in the uniform tuition amount charged pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-3, if applicable. This provision shall not supersede a provision included in any collective bargaining agreement.

F-1 Visa Students

The school district is not required to, but may permit the attendance of F-1 Visa students into the school district only with the payment of full tuition and a signed tuition contract. The district may require advance payment of full tuition before providing the requested I-20 Form, in accordance with the provisions of Federal regulation 8 CFR 214.3. A F-1 Visa is granted to a foreign student through an application process that must include, but is not limited to, signed approval by the receiving school district exhibiting the receiving school district will accept the foreign student for enrollment and the foreign student's proof of financial means to pay the full tuition to the receiving school district for the academic year. The host family must be domiciled in the school district and shall submit a request to the Superintendent of Schools with supporting documentation as determined by the Superintendent or designee. A student with a F-1 Visa must be approved by the Board for attendance in the school district. The student's continued attendance in the school district shall be conditioned on a satisfactory attendance and disciplinary record.]

J-1 Visa Students

The school district is not required to, but may permit the attendance of J-1 Visa students into the school district. The host family must be domiciled in the school district and shall submit a request to the Superintendent of Schools with supporting documentation as determined by the Superintendent or designee. A student with a J-1 Visa must be approved by the Board for attendance in the school district and shall not pay tuition. The student's continued attendance in the school district shall be conditioned on a satisfactory attendance and disciplinary record.]

N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1; 18A:38-1.1; 18A:38-1.3; 18A:38-3;

18A:38-3.1; 18A:7B-12

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3; 6A:17-2.1 et seq.; 6A:22-1.1 et seq.

8 CFR 214.3

Adopted:

5116 EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

The Board of Education will admit and enroll homeless children and youths in accordance with Federal and State laws and New Jersey Administrative Code. The Board of Education adopts this Policy to be in compliance with law and administrative code to ensure the enrollment of homeless children and youths in school and to respond to appeals made by parents or other parties related to the enrollment of homeless children and youths.

The Board shall determine that a child or youth is homeless when the child or youth resides in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, including: hotels or motels; congregate shelters, including domestic violence and runaway shelters; transitional housing; and homes for adolescent mothers. A child or youth is also determined homeless when the child or youth resides in a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including: cars or other vehicles including mobile homes; tents or other temporary shelters; parks; abandoned buildings; bus or train stations; or temporary shelters provided to migrant workers and their children on farm sites. A child or youth is determined homeless when the child or youth resides in the residence of relatives or friends where the homeless child or youth resides out of necessity because the child's or youth's family lacks a regular or permanent residence of its own. A child or youth is also determined homeless when the child or youth resides in substandard housing.

The school district of residence for a homeless child or youth is responsible for the education of the child and shall assume all responsibilities as required in N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.3. The school district of residence for a homeless child or youth means the school district in which the parent of a homeless child or youth resided prior to becoming homeless.

The school district liaison designated by the Superintendent of Schools for the education of homeless children and youths is the school social worker. The school district liaison will facilitate communication and cooperation between the school district of residence and the school district where the homeless child or youth resides and shall assume all responsibilities as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.4(a).

When a homeless child or youth resides in a school district, the school district liaison shall notify the liaison of the school district of residence within

twenty-four hours of receiving notification from the parent, a shelter director, or an involved agency. Upon notification of the need for enrollment of a homeless child or youth, the liaison in the school district of residence shall coordinate enrollment procedures immediately based upon the best interest of the child pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.5(b).

The Superintendent of the school district of residence or designee shall decide in which school district the homeless child or youth shall be enrolled in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.5.

Unless parental rights have been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction, the parent retains all rights under N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.

When a dispute occurs regarding the determination of homelessness or the determination of the school district of enrollment made by the school district of residence, the Superintendent(s) or the designee(s) of the involved district(s) or the child's or youth's parent(s) shall immediately notify the Executive County Superintendent of Schools, who, in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Coordinator or the Coordinator's designee, shall immediately decide the child's or youth's status. If a dispute remains between the parent and the involved school district(s) following the Executive County Superintendent's determination, the parent or the involved district Board(s) of Education may appeal to the Commissioner of Education for determination pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3, Controversies and Disputes.

When a school district designated as the school district of residence disputes its designation as the school district of residence, or where no designation can be agreed upon by the involved school districts, the Superintendent(s) or designee(s) of the involved school districts shall immediately notify the Executive County Superintendent of Schools. The Executive County Superintendent shall make a determination immediately, if possible, but no later than within forty-eight hours and, when necessary, in consultation with the NJDOE's Homeless Education Coordinator or the Coordinator's designee.

If the dispute regarding determination of the school district of residence does not involve the determination of homelessness and/or school district of enrollment, the school district disputing the Executive County Superintendent's determination may appeal to the NJDOE pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-19.2(d), (e), and (f) and request a determination from the NJDOE Division of Administration and Finance. If an appeal of a determination of school district of residence also includes an appeal of the determination of homelessness and/or school district of enrollment, the appeal shall be submitted to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3, Controversies and Disputes.

Any dispute or appeal shall not delay the homeless child's or youth's immediate enrollment or continued enrollment in the school district. The homeless child or youth shall be enrolled in the school district in which enrollment or continued enrollment is sought by the parent, pending resolution of the dispute or appeal. Disputes and appeals involving the services provided to a homeless child or youth with a disability shall be made pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14.

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1, 18A:7B-12, or 18A:7B-12.1, or any other section of law to the contrary, any student who moves from one school district to another as a result of being homeless due to an act of terrorism or due to a natural disaster which results in the declaration of a state of emergency or disaster by the State or by the Federal government, may continue to enroll in the school district in which the parent or guardian last resided prior to becoming homeless for up to two full school years after the act of terrorism or natural disaster; and during the two-year period, if the student is enrolled in the district in which the parent last resided prior to becoming homeless and the student's parent remains homeless for that period, the student shall attend that district tuition-free and that district shall provide the student transportation to and from school in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12.3.

Financial responsibility, including the payment of tuition for the homeless child or youth, will be in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.8. The school district of residence shall list the child on its annual Application for State School Aid (ASSA) pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-33 until the parent establishes a permanent residence or is deemed domiciled in another jurisdiction pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.d. At that time, the school district of residence or the school district in which the parent has been deemed domiciled shall no longer list the student on its ASSA. The State shall assume fiscal responsibility for the tuition of the child pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12.1 and shall pay the tuition to the school district in which the child or youth is currently enrolled until the parent establishes a permanent residence or is deemed domiciled in another jurisdiction pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.d. under the circumstances outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.8(c).

On or before December 31 of each year, the district shall report to the Office of Homelessness Prevention in the Department of Community Affairs an accounting of each instance in which the district is made aware that a student enrolled in the district because the student's parent moved to the district as a result of being homeless in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.f.

N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12; 18A:7B-12.1; 18A:7B-12.3; 18A:38-1
N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.1 et seq.

Adopted:

OPERATIONS

8500 FOOD SERVICES

The Board of Education shall make school lunch available to all students enrolled in a school in the district unless less than five percent of enrolled students in the school are Federally eligible for a free or reduced price lunch in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4. School lunches made available pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4 and this Policy shall meet minimum nutritional standards, established by the Department of Education.

Free or reduced price breakfast and lunch, as required, shall be offered, under a school lunch program, school breakfast program, or a breakfast after the bell program, to all enrolled students who are determined to be Federally eligible for free or reduced price meals. As provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4.a.(3) and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.a.(2), any student who is eligible for a reduced price lunch and breakfast, pursuant to Federal income eligibility standards and criteria, shall not be required to pay for such lunch or breakfast. Free lunch or breakfast shall also be offered to each enrolled student who is Federally ineligible for free or reduced price meals, but who has an annual household income that is not less than one hundred and eighty-six percent, and not more than one hundred ninety-nine percent, of the Federal poverty level, as determined pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.

- A. Breakfast Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10; 18A:33-10.1; 18A:33-11; 18A:33-11.1; 18A:33-11.3; 18A:33-14a.

If twenty percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on October 1 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district shall establish a school breakfast program in the school in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10 to the contrary, if ten percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on October 1 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program the district shall establish a breakfast program in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.1.

If seventy percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on or before the last school day before October 16 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast

Program, the district shall establish a breakfast after the bell program pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11, in implementing a school lunch program, pursuant to 18A:33-4 et seq., a school breakfast program, pursuant N.J.S.A. 18A:33-9 et seq., or N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.1, or a breakfast after the bell program, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.1 or N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3, the district shall:

1. Publicize, to parents and students, the availability of the respective school meals program, as well as the various ways in which a student may qualify to receive free or reduced price meals under the program, as provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4 and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a;
2. Make every effort to ensure that subsidized students are not recognized as program participants, by the student body, faculty, or staff, in a manner that is different from the manner in which unsubsidized students are recognized as program participants. Such efforts shall include, but need not be limited to, the establishment of a neutral meal plan or voucher system that does not make a distinction between subsidized and unsubsidized students; and
3. Make every effort to:
 - a. Facilitate the prompt and accurate identification of categorically eligible students who may be certified to participate in the program, on a subsidized basis, without first submitting an application therefore, and, whenever an application is required to establish eligibility for subsidized meals, encourage students and their families to submit a subsidized school meals application for that purpose;
 - b. Facilitate and expedite, to the greatest extent practicable, the subsidized school meals application and income-eligibility determination processes that are used, by the district, to certify a student for free or reduced price school meals on the basis of income, and assist parents in completing the school meals application; and
 - c. Encourage students who are neither categorically eligible nor income-eligible for free or reduced price school meals to nonetheless participate, on a paid and unsubsidized basis, in the program.

If the district participates in the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district is encouraged to increase the number of students participating in the program by establishing a breakfast after the bell program that incorporates school breakfast into the first-period classroom or the first few minutes of the school day pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.1.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a., school breakfasts made available to students under a school breakfast program or a breakfast after the bell program shall meet minimum nutritional standards, established by the New Jersey Department of Education.

The State of New Jersey shall provide funding to each school in the district if the school operates a School Breakfast Program or a breakfast after the bell program, as may be necessary to reimburse the costs associated with the school's provision of free breakfasts, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.b., to students who are Federally ineligible for free or reduced price meals.

B. Summer Food Service Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23; 18A:33-24; 18A:33-25; 18A:33-26

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24, if fifty percent or more of the students enrolled in the school district on or before the last school day before October 16 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district shall become a sponsor or site under the Federal Summer Food Service Program or apply for a waiver pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23, the district shall notify each student enrolled and the student's parent of the availability of, and criteria of eligibility for, the summer meals program and the locations in the district where the summer meals are available. The district shall provide this notification by distributing flyers provided by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture pursuant to subsection N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23.c. The district may also provide electronic notice of the information through the usual means by which the district communicates with parents and students electronically.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.a., the New Jersey Department of Agriculture may grant a waiver of the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24 et seq. To be granted a waiver, the district must show that it lacks the staff, facilities, or equipment to sponsor the Federal Summer Food Service Program, or the means to finance the hiring or acquisition of such staff, facilities, or equipment. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture also may grant a waiver for one year to the district if a

different sponsor currently runs the Federal Summer Food Service Program within the district's community.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.b., the district shall report to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in the manner prescribed by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, its reasons for requesting a waiver of the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24 et seq. The report shall include, but need not be limited to, a description of the specific impediments to implementing the program and actions that could be taken to remove those impediments or, where applicable, the identification of the sponsor that currently runs the program within the same community.

C. Information Provided to Parents Regarding the National School Lunch Program and the Federal School Breakfast Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1

1. At the beginning of each school year, or upon initial enrollment, in the case of a student who enrolls during the school year, the school shall provide each student's parent with:
 - a. Information on the National School Lunch Program and the Federal School Breakfast Program, including, but not limited to, information on the availability of free or reduced price meals for eligible students, information on the application and determination processes that are used to certify eligible students for subsidized school meals, and information on the rights that are available to students and their families under N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1 and N.J.S.A.18A:33-21; and
 - b. A school meals application form, as well as instructions for completing the application, and, as necessary, assistance in completing the application.
2. The school meals information and application provided to parents, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.a. shall:
 - a. Be communicated in a language that the parent understands;
 - b. Specify the limited purposes for which collected personal data may be used, as provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.c.; and
 - c. Be submitted to the parent either in writing or electronically. In the latter case, the school district shall

use the usual means by which it communicates with parents electronically.

3. A school meals application that is completed by a parent shall be confidential, and shall not be used or shared by the student's school or school district, except as may be necessary to:
 - a. Determine whether a student identified in the application is eligible for free or reduced price school meals;
 - b. Determine whether the school or school district is required, by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3 or by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24, to establish a breakfast after the bell program, or to participate as a sponsor or site in the Federal Summer Meals Service Program;
 - c. Ensure that the school receives appropriate reimbursement, from the State and Federal governments, for meals provided to eligible students, free of charge, through a school lunch program, a school breakfast program, a breakfast after the bell program, a summer meals program, or an emergency meals distribution program; and
 - d. Facilitate school aid determinations under the "School Funding Reform Act of 2008," N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-43 et seq.

D. Free or Reduced Price Meals' Application Process – 7 CFR 245

School meals applications shall be reviewed in a timely manner. An eligibility determination will be made, the family will be notified of its status, and the status will be implemented as soon as possible within ten operating days of receipt of the completed application pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6(c)(6). Any student found eligible shall be offered free or reduced price meals or free milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility and shall continue to receive such meals during the pendency of any inquiry regarding their eligibility in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Carry-over of previous year's eligibility for students shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(1) and (2), eligibility for free or reduced price meals, as determined through an approved application or by direct certification, must remain in effect for the entire school year and for up to thirty operating days in the subsequent school year. Prior to the

processing of an application or the completion of direct certification procedures for the current school year, children from households with approved applications or documentation of direct certification on file from the preceding year, shall be offered reimbursable free and reduced price meals, as appropriate.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(6)(iii), children from households that notify the local educational agency that they do not want free or reduced price benefits must have their benefits discontinued as soon as possible.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6(c)(7), if the district receives an incomplete school meals application or a school meals application that does not meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced priced benefits, the school meals application must be denied. The district shall document and retain the denied school meals application and reasons for ineligibility for three years in accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(e).

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(7), parents of students who are denied benefits must receive prompt, written notification of their denial. The notification may be provided by mail or e-mail to the individual who signed the school meals application. Posting the denial on the “notification” page of an online system does not meet this requirement. Likewise, informing the parent of denial via telephone does not meet this requirement. If the district uses an automated telephone information system to notify parents of denied benefits, the district must also provide the parents with written notification of the denial. The notification must provide the: reason for denial of benefits; right to appeal; instructions on how to appeal; and ability to reapply for free and reduced price benefits at any time during the school year.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(e), the district shall record the eligibility determination and notification in an easily referenced format. The record shall include the: denial date; reason for denial; date the denial notice was sent; and signature or initials of the determining official (may be electronic, where applicable).

Any parents of students who have benefits that are to be reduced or terminated must be given ten calendar days’ written notice of the change prior to the date the change will go into effect pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6a(j). The first day of the advance notice period shall be the day the notice is sent. The notice of adverse action may be sent via mail or to the e-mail address of the parent. The district shall notify the household of adverse action by phone only.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6a(j), the notice of adverse action must advise the parents of: change in benefits; reasons for the change; an appeal must be

filed within the ten calendar days advance notice period to ensure continued benefits while awaiting a hearing and decision; instructions on how to appeal; and the parents may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year.

If the district participates in any National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, or provides free milk under the Special Milk Program, the district shall submit to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture a free and reduced price policy statement pursuant to 7 CFR 245.10.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.1(b), the district shall avoid any policy or practice leading to the overt identification of students receiving free or reduced price meal benefits. Overt identification is any action that may result in a child being recognized as potentially eligible for or certified for free or reduced price school meals. Unauthorized disclosure or overt identification of students receiving free and reduced price meal benefits is prohibited. The district shall ensure that a child's eligibility status is not disclosed at any point in the process of providing free and reduced price meals, including: notification of the availability of free and reduced price benefits; certification and notification of eligibility; provision of meals in the cafeteria; and the point of service. In addition, the district shall ensure students who receive free and reduced price benefits are not overtly identified when they are provided additional services under programs or activities available to low-income students based on their eligibility for free and reduced price meals.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.2, disclosure means revealing or using individual student's program eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced price meal or free milk eligibility process for a purpose other than the purpose for which the information was obtained. Disclosure includes, but is not limited to, access, release, or transfer of personal data about students by means of print, tape, microfilm, microfiche, electronic communication, or any other means. It includes eligibility information obtained through the school meals application or through direct certification.

If the district accepts both cash and electronic payments, the district shall ensure students are not overtly identified through the method of payment pursuant to 7 CFR 245.8(b). To the maximum extent practicable, the district must ensure the sale of non-program foods and the method of payment for non-program foods do not inadvertently result in students being identified by their peers as receiving free and reduced price benefits.

The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary or designee will verify applications of those eligible for free or reduced price meals in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

E. Meal Charge Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21

The Board of Education provides a meal charge program to permit unsubsidized students in the district to charge for breakfast or lunch. Collection of any payment for a meal charge program account that is in arrears shall be addressed in accordance with provisions of this Policy.

“Unsubsidized student” means a student who is neither categorically eligible nor income-eligible for free or reduced price school meals, and who is, consequently, required to pay for any such meals that are served to the student under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program.

The Board of Education recognizes a student may not have breakfast or lunch (meal), as applicable, or money to purchase a meal at school on a school day causing the student’s meal charge account to fall into arrears. The district shall contact the student’s parent to provide notice of the arrearage and shall provide the parent with a period of ten school days to pay the amount due. If the student’s parent has not made full payment by the end of the designated ten school day period, then the district shall again contact the student’s parent to provide notice of any action to be taken by the school district in response to the arrearage.

A parent who has received a second notice their child’s meal bill is in arrears and who has not made payment in full within one week from the date of the second notice may be requested to meet with the Principal or designee to discuss and resolve the matter.

A parent’s refusal to meet with the Principal or designee or take other steps to resolve the matter may be indicative of more serious issues in the family or household. However, when a parent’s routine failure to provide breakfast or lunch is reasonably suspected to be indicative of child neglect, the Principal or designee shall immediately report such suspicion to the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency as required in N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10. Such reporting shall not be delayed to accommodate a parent’s meeting with the Principal or designee.

A school district shall report at least biannually to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture the number of students who are denied school breakfast or school lunch in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.a.(2) and this Policy.

Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 or this Policy shall be construed to require the district to deny or restrict the ability of an unsubsidized student to access school breakfast or school lunch when the student’s school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears.

The school or school district shall not:

1. Publicly identify or stigmatize an unsubsidized student who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears. (For example, by requiring the student to sit at a separate table or by requiring that the student wear a wristband, hand stamp, or identifying mark, or by serving the student an alternative meal);
2. Require an unsubsidized student, who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears to do chores or other work to pay for the school breakfast or school lunch;
3. Require an unsubsidized student to discard a school breakfast or school lunch after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for a school breakfast or school lunch or because money is owed for previously provided meals;
4. Prohibit an unsubsidized student, or sibling of such a student, from attending or participating in non-fee-based extracurricular activities, field trips, or school events, from receiving grades, official transcripts, or report cards, or from graduating or attending graduation events, solely because of the student's unresolved meal debt; or
5. Require the parent of an unsubsidized student to pay fees or costs in excess of the actual amounts owed for meals previously served to the student.

If an unsubsidized student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals, the Principal or designee shall:

1. Determine whether the student is categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price meals, by conducting a review of all available records related to the student, and by making at least two attempts, not including the initial attempt made pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.c.(2), to contact the student's parent and have the parent fill out a school meals application; and
2. Contact the parent of the unsubsidized student to offer assistance with respect to the completion of the school meals application; and to determine if there are other issues in the household that have caused the student to have insufficient funds to purchase a school breakfast or school lunch; and to offer any other appropriate assistance.

The school district shall direct communications about a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill being in arrears to the parent and not to the student. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 shall prohibit the school district from sending a student home with a letter addressed to a parent.

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 and the provisions of any other law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, an unsubsidized student shall not be denied access to a school meal, regardless of the student's ability to pay or the status of the student's meal arrearages, during any period of time in which the school is making a determination, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.c., as to whether the student is eligible for, and can be certified to receive, free or reduced price meals.

If the student's meal bill is in arrears, but the student has the money to purchase a meal on a subsequent school day, the student will be provided a meal with payment and the food service program will not use the student's payment to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that school day's meal.

Students receiving free meals will not be denied a meal even if they accrued a negative balance from other purchases in the cafeteria.

The school district may post this Policy on the school district's website provided there is a method in place to ensure this Policy reaches all households without access to a computer or the Internet.]

F. Provision of Meals to Homeless Children – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21c.

The district's liaison for the education of homeless children shall coordinate with district personnel to ensure that a homeless student receives free school meals and is monitored according to district policies pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21c.

G. Provision of School Meals During Period of School Closure – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2

In the event the Board is provided a written directive, by either the New Jersey Department of Health or the health officer of the jurisdiction, to institute a public health-related closure due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the district shall implement a program, during the period of the school closure, to provide school meals, at meal distribution sites designated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.b., to all students enrolled in the district who are either categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

In the event of an emergency closure, as described in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.a., the district shall identify one or more school meal distribution sites that are walkable and easily accessible to students in the district. The district shall collaborate with county and municipal government officials in identifying appropriate sites. A school meals distribution site may include, but need not be limited to: faith-based locations; community centers, such as YMCAs; and locations in the district where meals are made available through a summer meals program. In a district that includes high density housing, the district shall make every effort to identify a school meal distribution site in that housing area.

The district shall identify students enrolled in the district who are categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for whom a school meal distribution site, identified pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.b., is not within walking distance. In the case of these students, the district shall distribute the school meals to the student's residence or to the student's bus stop along an established bus route, provided that the student or the student's parent is present at the bus stop for the distribution. Food distributed pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.c. may include up to a total of three school days' worth of food per delivery.

The district may use school buses owned and operated by the district to distribute school meals pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2. If the district does not own and operate its own buses, the district may contract for the distribution of school meals, and these contracts shall not be subject to the public bidding requirements established pursuant to the "Public School Contracts Law," N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-1 et seq.

The district shall collaborate, as feasible, with other districts and with local government units to implement the emergency meals distribution program, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2, in order to promote administrative and operational efficiencies and cost savings.

School lunches and breakfasts that are made available, through an emergency meals distribution program operating pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2, shall be provided to eligible students, free of charge, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4.a. and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.

H. Statement of Compliance

All food service programs shall be operated pursuant to 7 CFR 245, as appropriate, and this Policy.

N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-42.1; 18A:33-4; 18A:33-5; 18A:33-10;

18A:33-10.1; 18A:33-11; 18A:33-11.1; 18A:33-11.2;
18A:33-11.3; 18A:33-14a.; 18A:33-21; 18A:33-21a.;
18A:33-21b1; 18A:33-21c.; 18A:33-23; 18A:33-24;
18A:33-25; 18A:33-26; 18A:33-27.2; 18A:58-7.1;
18A:58-7.2

N.J.A.C. 2:36

N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.6 et seq.

N.J.A.C. 8:24-2.1 through 7.5

7 C.F.R. 210.1 et seq.

Adopted: