

# PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of registered public school students who are eligible for free or reduced price school lunch, disaggregated by race.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Children who are well-nourished are healthier and do better in school.<sup>1</sup> The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) helps to ensure that all school children have access to balanced and nutritionally adequate meals. Today, the program subsidizes breakfast, lunch, and snacks for over 30 million children in schools and residential facilities nationwide. Nearly 18 million of those children receive free or reduced price meals. Children whose families have incomes less than 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible for free lunch, while children with family income below 185% are eligible for reduced price lunch. For a family of four, 185% FPL was about \$39,000 in 2008.

The number of students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch is commonly used as a measure of how many students live in low-income families. Research reveals persistent achievement gaps between children from low-income families and their higher-income counterparts. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests show that 73% of Louisiana 4th graders who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch scored at or above basic on the 2007 NAEP reading assessment, compared to just 43% of Louisiana 4th graders who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.<sup>2</sup>

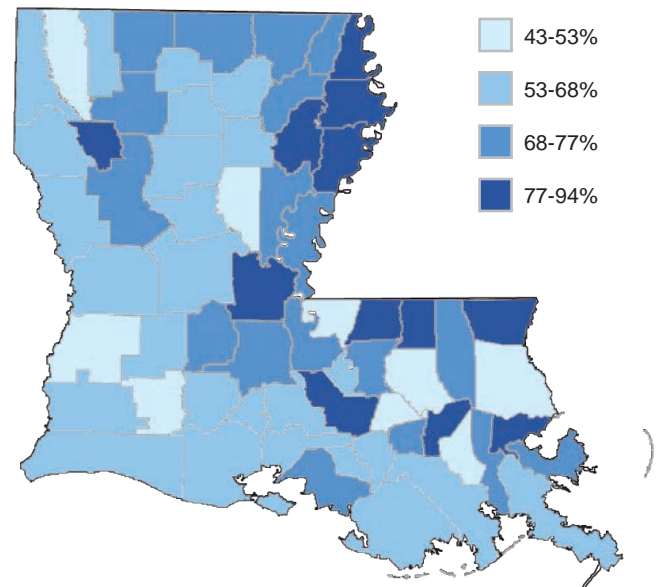
In Louisiana, the percentage of public school students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch increased from 58% in 2000-2001 to 65% in the 2008-2009 school year. Low-income children constituted a majority of public school students in all but eight Louisiana parishes.

## RACIAL DISPARITY

In Louisiana, black public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch at a rate that is approximately twice as large as the white rate. Black students were more likely than white students to be eligible for free or reduced lunch in every parish. Three parishes—Ascension, St. Charles, and West Feliciana—had racial disparity ratios greater than three, meaning that the percentage of black students eligible for free or reduced lunch was more than three times as large as the percentage of white students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

## DATA SOURCE

Agenda for Children's analysis of information provided by Department of Education, Division of Planning,



**PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH (PERCENT) — SY 2008**

Analysis, and Information Resources

## DATA NOTE

Data for City of Baker, Central Community and City of Zachary districts are reflected in East Baton Rouge's data. Data for the City of Monroe district are reflected in Ouachita's data. Data for Recovery School District schools are reflected in the data of the parish in which they are located. Data for lab schools, Marine Institutes, and all other charter schools are not reflected in any parish's data, but are reflected in the statewide total.

## RATE CALCULATION

$100 * (\text{total number of public school students eligible for free or reduced lunch} \div \text{total number of public school students})$

$100 * (\text{number of black public school students eligible for free or reduced lunch} \div \text{number of black public school students})$

$100 * (\text{number of white public school students eligible for free or reduced lunch} \div \text{number of white public school students})$

<sup>1</sup> Food Research and Action Center, "Health Consequences of Hunger," Food Research and Action Center, retrieved from <http://www.frac.org/> on 5/1/2009.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer, U.S. Department of Education, retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/> on 8/1/2009.

# PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVING FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH

## NUMBER AND PERCENT OF STUDENTS\*

SY 2008	TOTAL		BLACK		WHITE		RACIAL DISPARITY RATIO**
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>LOUISIANA</b>	<b>447,760</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>275,138</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>149,042</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Acadia	5,925	63	2,460	89	3,377	51	1.7
Allen	2,587	61	834	82	1,660	55	1.5
Ascension	8,446	44	4,643	78	3,165	26	3.0
Assumption	2,684	66	1,613	92	1,025	46	2.0
Avoyelles	5,246	83	2,673	93	2,467	75	1.2
Beauregard	3,112	51	813	80	2,186	45	1.8
Bienville	1,608	72	1,179	92	413	45	2.0
Bossier	8,582	43	4,449	74	3,286	26	2.8
Caddo	27,120	63	22,712	82	3,903	28	2.9
Calcasieu	19,223	58	9,858	83	8,824	44	1.9
Caldwell	1,142	65	292	91	839	59	1.5
Cameron	812	61	28	80	757	61	1.3
Catahoula	1,211	72	660	94	531	55	1.7
Claiborne	1,702	72	1,359	85	323	44	1.9
Concordia	2,875	73	1,916	95	932	50	1.9
De Soto	3,226	66	2,200	89	945	41	2.2
East Baton Rouge	42,963	77	37,355	88	3,824	35	2.5
East Carroll	1,294	92	1,254	93	34	71	1.3
East Feliciana	1,906	85	1,538	91	358	66	1.4
Evangeline	4,599	76	2,309	94	2,230	64	1.5
Franklin	2,702	81	1,639	96	1,036	66	1.5
Grant	2,168	63	418	94	1,719	58	1.6
Iberia	9,161	66	5,487	88	3,123	45	2.0
Iberville	3,582	84	2,894	90	641	63	1.4
Jackson	1,313	58	725	87	573	41	2.1
Jefferson	32,775	74	18,605	86	8,152	58	1.5
Jefferson Davis	3,139	53	1,101	81	1,960	45	1.8
La Salle	1,277	49	240	87	1,017	44	2.0
Lafayette	17,977	60	11,378	88	5,682	37	2.4
Lafourche	9,019	61	3,074	92	5,033	49	1.9
Lincoln	3,940	58	2,831	84	987	31	2.7
Livingston	12,348	51	1,354	89	10,558	48	1.9
Madison	1,908	90	1,786	91	108	78	1.2
Morehouse	3,721	77	2,724	87	969	58	1.5
Natchitoches	4,746	70	3,429	87	1,216	45	1.9
Orleans	29,359	84	27,785	87	560	32	2.7
Ouachita	16,899	60	11,880	86	4,739	34	2.5
Plaquemines	2,475	68	1,067	90	1,153	54	1.7
Pointe Coupee	2,032	77	1,405	90	586	56	1.6
Rapides	15,835	66	9,018	88	6,073	48	1.8
Red River	1,297	85	923	93	361	71	1.3
Richland	2,588	76	1,652	93	911	57	1.6
Sabine	2,869	67	978	94	1,101	51	1.8
St. Bernard	3,226	69	909	88	2,007	62	1.4
St. Charles	4,601	48	2,800	81	1,548	27	3.0
St. Helena	1,112	91	1,061	92	49	75	1.2
St. James	2,960	71	2,519	91	414	31	2.9
St. John the Baptist	5,469	85	4,546	90	704	66	1.4
St. Landry	11,291	74	7,556	87	3,558	57	1.5
St. Martin	5,667	67	3,431	86	2,108	49	1.8
St. Mary	6,906	72	3,988	91	2,483	53	1.7
St. Tammany	15,559	43	5,500	80	9,198	34	2.4
Tangipahoa	14,343	74	8,551	93	5,354	55	1.7
Tensas	702	94	642	94	47	89	1.1
Terrebonne	11,418	60	4,655	84	5,013	45	1.9
Union	2,132	75	1,137	93	814	57	1.6
Vermilion	5,465	60	1,854	91	3,309	50	1.8
Vernon	5,548	57	1,337	68	3,767	55	1.2
Washington	6,680	87	3,257	96	3,312	80	1.2
Webster	4,532	62	2,725	86	1,710	43	2.0
West Baton Rouge	2,502	66	1,718	85	735	43	2.0
West Carroll	1,719	76	401	96	1,263	70	1.4
West Feliciana	1,079	46	766	77	307	23	3.3
Winn	1,828	68	869	93	917	54	1.7

\*Percentage reflects the percentage of each group that is served by the free and reduced lunch program. For example, 44% of white public school students in Louisiana are served by the free or reduced lunch program.

\*\*The racial disparity ratio was calculated by dividing the black rate by the white rate. The resulting numbers show, for example, that black public students in Louisiana are eligible for free or reduced lunch at a rate that is twice that of their white counterparts.