Economically Disadvantaged Students Data Collection

As required by the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is required to disaggregate student data by subgroups for accountability purposes. This data collection includes currently enrolled students with temporary, free, reduced, or Identified Student Percentage (ISP) eligibility tags. For schools or districts participating in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) or charter schools not participating in the National School Lunch Program, the ISP data includes data reported to the NCDPI through the Office of District Operations and School Nutrition.

Beginning with the 2021–22 school year, the criteria for identifying Economically Disadvantaged Student (EDS) status was updated by the United State Department of Education. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is defining economically disadvantaged status as:

- Any student identified by a public-school unit, meeting the criteria of Directly Certified, Categorically Eligible, or a method consistent with state or federal guidance for financial assistance regardless of participation or eligibility in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Identification of Economically Disadvantaged Students
- The process for reporting National School Lunch Program eligibility for all Non-CEP NSLP participating schools by student does not change.
- Schools can now identify a student as economically disadvantage who may not be identified as part of the NSLP.
- NCDPI will continue to use authoritative sources for Direct Certification and Categorically Eligible data to identify economic disadvantage status. In addition to these sources, public school units may provide additional eligible students from a collection of information consistent with state or federal guidance for financial assistance.
- For all schools, a local process may be developed to collect information and identify students meeting the criteria for economically disadvantaged status. For example, for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, approved household applications are one method of assigning the economically disadvantaged status.
- All identified students must be qualified using the state defined process. Each public school unit will be required to maintain and produce the criteria and documentation for any economically disadvantaged determination made outside of Direct Certification and Categorically Eligible determinations upon request.
- It is now possible for the EDS data collection and submission processes to contain both the eligible students for National School Lunch Program participation and those identified as economically disadvantaged by the public school unit using another method.
- The Office of Accountability and Testing has a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the Office of District Operations and School Nutrition that restricts who has access to the National School Lunch Program information. The Memorandum of Agreement is posted on the Accountability Services Management website at https://www.rep.dpi.state.nc.us/, and is updated with access changes periodically.

Data Collection Processes

The EDS files uploaded from public school unit test coordinators are checked on the 2024 Data Collection Status Viewer:

- December and April data collections will be published to the web, while the April data collection will continue to be published in the NC Report Card for the percent of economically disadvantaged students in a school.
- An EDS Head Count (EDSHC) report is available for all schools in the status viewer at 2024-DEC-EDSHC for the December 1 collection, 2024-APR-EDSHC for the April 1 collection, or 2024-EOY-EDSHC for the end of year collection.
- All schools, including CEP districts and non-participating charter schools, must submit an EDS file. If CEP districts or non-participating charter schools do not collect the EDS data using an alternate method, a blank EDS file must be submitted.
- EDS information for all schools can be viewed in EDSHC section of the status viewer. EDS information submitted by schools will see eligibility information under the 1237_Count for EDS tags in the EDSHC. Directly certified and categorically eligible for free meals data as reported by the Office of District Operations and School Nutrition can also be viewed in EDSHC under DC_Count.
- For the 2023–24 school year, an end of year collection may be necessary for summer meal programs.

TABLE 1. EDS information per public school unit type

Public school unit type	Submit an EDS file?	EDS file eligibility tags	Summary information available in status viewer EDSHC?
100% National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participating non-CEP LEA's or charters	Yes	1,2,3,7, or 9	Yes
100% CEP LEA's or charters	Yes	7	Yes
Mixed CEP/non-CEP	Yes	1,2,3,7, or 9	Yes
Non-NSLP Participating Charters	Yes	7	Yes

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and the Memorandum of Agreement with the NCDPI Office of District Operations and School Nutrition prohibits the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information derived from education records as well as the requirement to provide certain privacy protections for those education records. As a result, these EDS files may not be placed anywhere except the secure device used to transfer data to the NCDPI. It is recommended to create a folder on the C drive to store the EDS files (C:\2024\EDS). These data must not be permanently stored on any other electronic devices (smartphones, laptops, etc.), or storage device that can be lost or stolen without encryption. Additionally, student EDS flags will not be available in any student-level reports created by the Office of Accountability and Testing; including, but not limited to all student level audit files.

EDS File Specification for Public School Units

Description

The EDS file is used to identify which currently enrolled students within the public school unit are economically disadvantaged.

The EDS files are checked on the 2024 Data Collection Status Viewer at *2024-EDS*, *2024-DEC-EDS, or 2024-APR-EDS*.

- Include currently enrolled students with temporary (code 1), free (code 2), reduced (code 3), PSU identified (code 7).
- Include currently enrolled students who completed a household application but were denied (code 9) for PEBT purposes.
- Full pay or withdrawn students should not be included.
- Currently enrolled students not listed in this file will automatically be considered non-EDS.
- The data collection must include students at all grade levels pre-kindergarten through thirteen (including XG grade level students). However, charter schools must not submit pre-kindergarten data.

Filename

The filename is EDS###.TXT where ### is the PSU code. The file must be uploaded manually. (Beginning with the 2022–23 school year, NC Tools can no longer be used to upload the EDS file.)

Due Date

The EDS files are due on the first of each month. Files must be uploaded to the secure shell and accepted as complete no later than the seventh of the month.

File Format

The file format uses tab delimited, which separates each value by exactly one-tab character. The first row must be the column header row, with each cell containing its column name.

TABLE 2. Column headers and descriptions

school_code	The official six-digit school code. For charters and lab schools, this will be an alphanumeric code such as "01A000."
student_id	This is the PowerSchool student ID.
first_name	The student's legal first name.
last_name	The student's legal surname.
eligibility_code	This tag should indicate the current free/reduced lunch eligibility status of the student.
eligibility_date	This is the date the student's eligibility starts with format MM/DD/YYYY.
The accepted eligibility code values are: 1 = Temporarily Free or Reduced (Treated as Free) 2 = Free 3 = Reduced 7 = PSU identified students	
Code used for additional PEBT purposes: 9 = Denied (Household applications submitted for the 2022–2023 school year but did not qualify.)	

Sample Output on Status Viewer of the EDSHC File for ALL Schools
See the sample screen shot below from a PSU as of the December 1 collection that has a combination of CEP schools and traditional EDS schools.
- For auditing purposes, the Pct_EDS columns include the percent of students in grades pre-kindergarten through thirteen (including XG grade level students).
  - Pre-kindergarten students in charter schools are not to be included in the schools EDS files.

Common Errors
If a 0* is noted in the Pct_EDS column, verify if the following scenarios have occurred and correct if needed (this list is not exhaustive, just the most common):
- There is a coding mismatch with CEP designation and student coding.
- There are students not coded in the source file.
- There are no students in the school who qualify as EDS – this should be a **RARE** occurrence (if this is the case, the warning can be ignored).

FIGURE 1. View of EDSHC on status viewer.

Verifying and Correcting Errors and Warning Messages
1. *1237_Count is zero. Check EDS file submission*. The specified school in this warning is a NSLP participating school, but the EDS file does not contain any students identified as EDS. The testing coordinator (TC) should work with School Nutrition to identify why the school has no EDS students. A new file should be uploaded if the school does have EDS students. If

the school has no EDS students, the TC should email an explanation of why to the regional accountability office for documentation purposes.

2. *CEP school ****** has codes 123.* A school identified as a CEP school has submitted EDS eligibility codes of 1, 2 or 3. CEP schools should only have the eligibility code of 7 in the EDS file if the optional data collection form was used. If an optional form was not used, no EDS data should be submitted for this school (charter, lab, regional or residential schools would submit a blank EDS file in this situation).

3. *No students tagged for EDS subgroup.* The school appears to have no EDS students (no students were in the EDS file for this school, or the EDS file was blank). If this is a National School Lunch Participating school, the TC should work with School Nutrition to verify this school has no EDS students. A new file should be uploaded if the school does have EDS students. If the school has no EDS students, the TC should email an explanation of why to the regional accountability office for documentation purposes.

4. *Non-NSLP School ******: Has codes 123.* The school is classified as a non-National School Lunch Participating school, but the EDS eligibility tags in the EDS file has the codes 1, 2, or 3. Non-NSLP schools should only have the EDS eligibility tag of 7 in the files. If the optional collection was not used, a blank EDS file should be uploaded.