



## Why are Free and Reduced Price Applications Important?

More completed Free and Reduced Price Applications can translate into more families qualifying for the assistance their children need to do well in school. School districts receive reimbursements for school meals and other state or Federal money based on the number of students that qualify for free or reduced price meals. You can help families complete their school meal applications at the beginning of the school year. Here are a few ways to encourage families to complete their applications:

- Send a letter or flyer explaining why parents should complete the application. There are two sample letters to parents below. The first encourages parents to turn in their free and reduced price applications, and the second encourages participation in the School Breakfast Program.
- Make sure applications are available in most languages spoken in your community. School Meal Applications, instructions and letters in 33 languages are available [HERE](#) on the USDA Food and Nutrition Service School Meals website.
- Send applications and meal pricing policies to families along with other forms and notices they need to return.
- Remind parents that students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch also qualify for free or reduced priced breakfast.
- Include an envelope marked "Confidential" for application return.
- Follow up on students who received free or reduced price meals the prior year and have not submitted an application for the current year.
- If most of your students qualifying for free meal benefits were identified through direct certification, you may wish to send a reminder letter or flyer encouraging households with eligible children to accept and take advantage of those benefits.