



WCPSS Child Nutrition Services

Meal Price Review

Tiffany Lawrence, Senior Director Child Nutrition Services
June 2, 2026

Feeding WAKE County: YTD Program Overview

203



Schools

161,115



Students

(37.5% Free & Reduced)

21,000



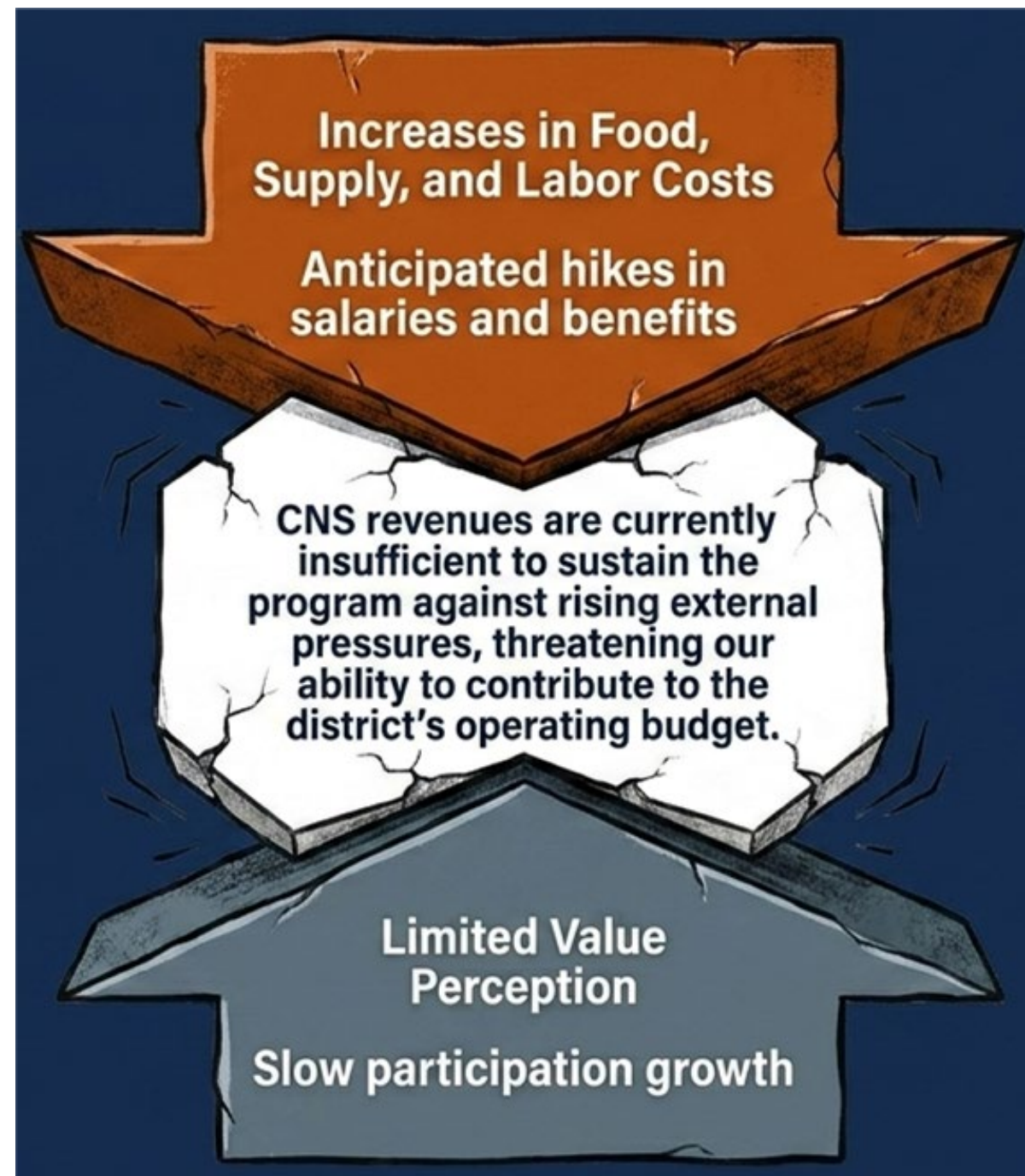
**Breakfast Meals
Served Per Day**

54,000



**Lunch Meals
Served Per Day**

The Challenge: Sustaining Program Operations



Proposed Action/Response

Increase of school lunch meal pricing

Strategic Plan Alignment: Priority 3, AIM 20

Supports financial sustainability: Raising meal prices helps maintain a self-sustaining Child Nutrition program, aligning with Aim 20's focus on efficient operations and responsible resource management within Operational Effectiveness.

Maintains high-quality services: Adjusted pricing ensures the district can continue providing consistent, high-quality meal services without reducing program effectiveness which is key to strong operational systems.

Protects district resources while maintaining equity: Limiting reliance on district subsidies allows funds to be used elsewhere, while free and reduced meal programs ensure equitable student access despite price changes.

Fund Balance Trends: Approaching the Critical Threshold



Metric	FY25 Annual	FY26 1st Qtr	FY26 Semi-Annual
Net Cash Resource	\$10,530,037.54	\$5,548,520.77	\$7,632,566.30
1 Mo. Cost	\$7,797,906.91	\$5,243,155.26	\$6,095,812.66
Balance	1.35	1.06	1.25

Warning: If the operating balance drops below 2.0 months, CNS cannot pay Indirect Costs to the district.

Data Related to
Wages & Benefits



Super Bowl LX
2026

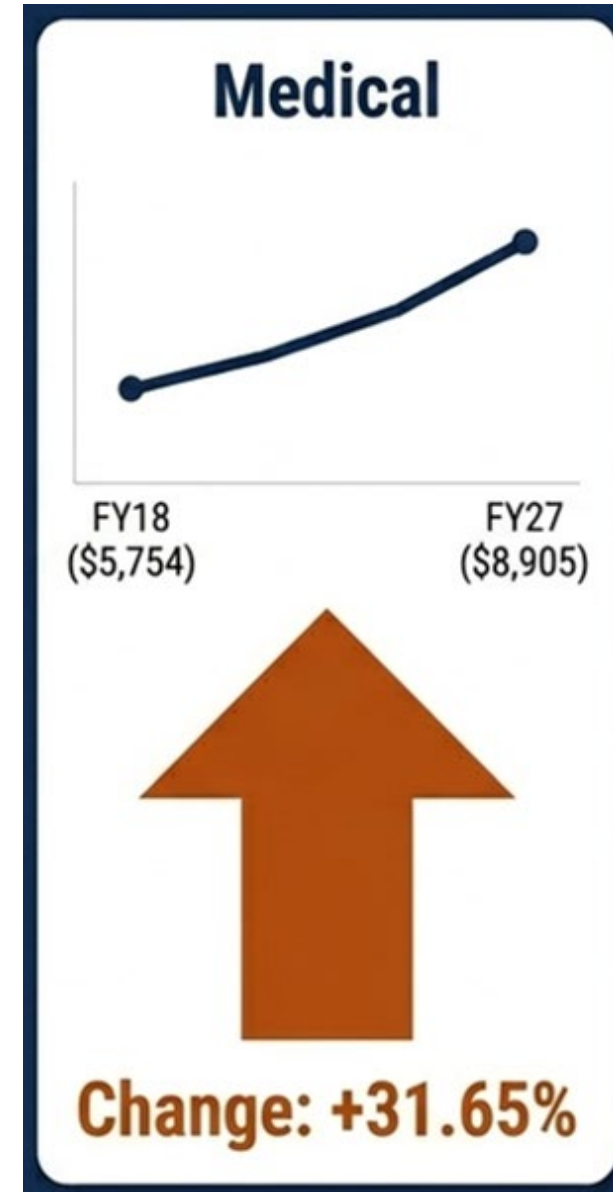
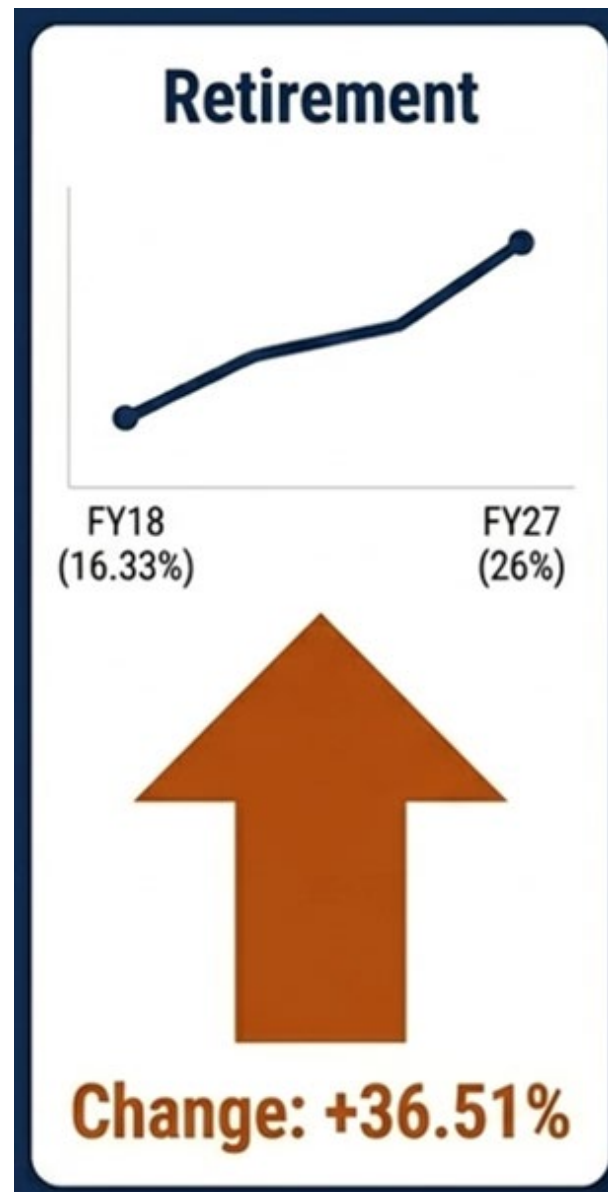
10 Year Labor Trajectory



Regional Competitiveness

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg: \$20.10
- Guilford: \$19.16
- WCPSS: \$17.75
- Durham: \$16.00

The Compound Impact of State Benefit Increases





New Breakfast Eggroll 2026

Food Cost Data

The Rising Costs of Ingredients and Logistics

ITEM INFLATION (FY15/16 vs FY26)

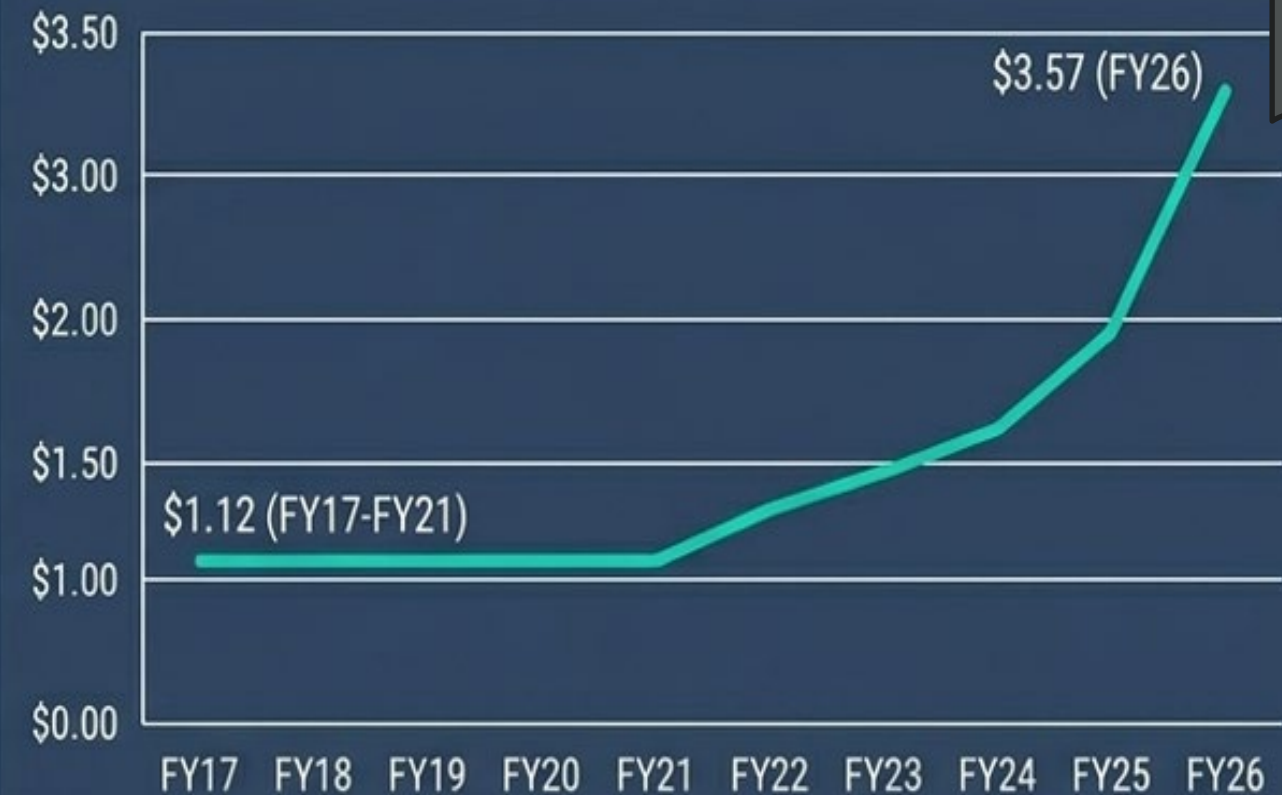
Chicken Sandwich: \$0.38 → \$1.15

Pepperoni Pizza Slice: \$0.26 → \$0.47

Chicken Bites: \$0.43 → \$0.91

Milk (Skim 8oz): \$0.24 → \$0.25

Distribution Case Fee



WCPSS processes an average of 445,906 cases per year. The exponential fee jump creates massive, unavoidable overhead.

Food Price Comparison - Your Everyday Restaurant Visit

Commercial Food Item	Restaurant Name	Menu Price	Calories	WAKE Cal.	Total Fat/ Sat Fat	WAKE Cal.	Sodium	WAKE Cal.	Carbs/ Fiber	WAKE Cal.
Chicken Sandwich	Chick fil A	\$5.25	420	190	18g/3.5g	10g/1.5g	1460mg	731mg	41g/1g	42g/5g
Chicken Nuggets (4)	McDonalds	\$3.19	170	190	10g/1.5g	7g/1g	340mg	470mg	10g/10g	13g/1g
Milk (8 oz) 1%	Chick fil A	\$1.85	90	80	2g/1.5g	0g/0g	105mg	125mg	10g/0g	12g/0f

WCPSS CNS: Students would get each of these entree items and additional items based on grade levels. ES students receive 1 to 2 vegetables, ½ cup of fruit, and a milk. HS students receive 2, ½ cup servings of fruit and 2, ½ cup of vegetables.

SY25/26 Key Performance Indicators



**Industry standards are from the Council of Great City Schools' data.

USDA Reimbursement Disconnect

Free Student Meal

USDA Reimburses \$4.69

WCPSS Current Lunch Price is \$3.75

Gap: **-\$0.94**

Paid Student Meal

USDA Reimburses \$0.53

WCPSS Current Lunch Price is \$3.75

Gap: **-\$3.22**

A student's ability to receive free/reduced meals is based solely on Federal eligibility guidelines, not determined by the WCPSS school nutrition department.

Data Related to Meal Pricing



National School Breakfast Week 2026

Historical Wake County Meal Pricing

	BREAKFAST			LUNCH		
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Student Full-Paid K-5	1.50	1.75	2.00	3.25	3.50	3.75
Student Full-Paid 6-12	1.75	2.00	2.25	3.50	3.75	4.00
Student Reduced Price	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
Adult	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	Ala Carte
**State Paying Student Co-Pay						

Meal Price Comparison

2025-2026							
	Wake	Durham	Guilford County	Orange	Chapel Hill Carrboro	Winston-Salem/Forsyth	Charlotte Mecklinburg
BREAKFAST							
Student Full-Paid K-5	\$ 2.00	Breakfast Provided at no cost to all students	\$ 1.00	Free for All	\$ 1.60	\$ 2.00	Breakfast Provided at no cost to all students
Student Full-Paid 6-8	\$ 2.25		\$ 1.00	\$ 1.75	\$ 1.60	\$ 2.10	
Student Full-Paid 9-12	\$ 2.25		\$ 1.00	\$ 1.75	\$ 1.60	\$ 2.20	
Student Reduced	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Adult	Ala Carte	\$ 2.50	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	\$ 2.15	Ala Carte	Ala Carte
LUNCH							
Student Full-Paid K-5	\$ 3.75	Lunch provided at no cost to all students	\$ 2.85	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.10	\$ 2.90	2.75
Student Full-Paid 6-8	\$ 4.00		\$ 2.85	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.35	\$ 3.00	2.75
Student Full-Paid 9-12	\$ 4.00		\$ 2.85	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.35	\$ 3.10	3.00
Student Reduced	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 0.40	\$ -	0.00
Adult	Ala Carte	4.50	Ala Carte	Ala Carte	4.25	Ala Carte	Ala Carte
ISP% APR 2023		49.39%	57.15%	42.32%	31.76%	57.06%	43.07%
Schools on CEP		100%	87%	30%	0%	85%	60%

What would it cost to cover all meals for all WCPSS students?

\$11,905,404

**Please note that this number is the cost to fund the gap from reimbursement and other revenue that would allow us to feed all students lunch at our current meal participation levels.

Factors Impacting the Current Situation

- Depleted Fund Balance
- Uncertainty around Governmental Changes to SNAP
- Perception of value vs meal price
- Potential negative impact for the district's operating budget.

Our Approach to Sustainability

Decrease Expenses

- Streamline entrée offerings.
- Increase direct ship items to the CNS Warehouse (bypassing the surging \$3.57 distributor case fee).
- Increase inventory monitoring and efficiency.

Increase Revenue

- Maximize Free/Reduced student eligibility identification.
- Increase a la carte (Smart Snack) sales.
- Increase overall meal participation.

- Adjust Meal Prices.

Proposed Solution: A Measured \$0.25 Increase

Student Full-Paid K-5: FY26 (\$3.75) → **FY27 (\$4.00)**

Student Full-Paid 6-8: FY26 (\$4.00) → **FY27 (\$4.25)**

Student Full-Paid 9-12: FY26 (\$4.00) → **FY27 (\$4.25)**

Adult: Ala Carte → **Ala Carte**

The \$0.25 increase applies to both Breakfast and Lunch across all full-paid tiers.

Potential Revenue Impact from Breakfast Price Increase

Projected Revenue Increase Using FY26 Paid Breakfast Served		
		Revenue
\$	0.10	\$ 39,454
\$	0.20	\$ 76,211
\$	0.25	\$ 93,578
\$	0.40	\$ 141,632
\$	0.50	\$ 170,296
\$	0.75	\$ 230,154
\$	1.00	\$ 273,153
\$	1.25	\$ 299,293
\$	1.50	\$ 612,045

	Breakfast		% increase	Applied Part %
	ES	MS & HS		
Current	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.25		
→	\$ 2.10	\$ 2.35	4.7%	3.306%
→	\$ 2.20	\$ 2.45	9.4%	6.611%
→	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	11.8%	8.264%
→	\$ 2.40	\$ 2.65	18.9%	13.222%
→	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	23.6%	16.528%
→	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	35.4%	24.792%
→	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	47.2%	33.056%
→	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50	59.0%	41.319%
→	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.75	70.8%	49.583%

Current Participation and \$.25 Meal Price Increase

\$93,578 possible revenue

Potential Revenue Impact from Lunch Price Increase

Projected Revenue Increase Using FY26 Paid Lunch Served			Lunch		% increase	Applied Part %
		Revenue	ES	MS & HS		
.						
\$	0.10	\$ 228,605	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.75		
\$	0.20	\$ 448,197	\$ 3.60	\$ 3.85	2.8%	1.933%
\$	0.25	\$ 554,612	\$ 3.70	\$ 3.95	5.5%	3.867%
\$	0.40	\$ 860,339	\$ 3.75	\$ 4.00	6.9%	4.833%
\$	0.50	\$ 1,052,889	\$ 3.90	\$ 4.15	11.0%	7.733%
\$	0.75	\$ 1,494,831	\$ 4.00	\$ 4.25	13.8%	9.667%
\$	1.00	\$ 1,880,437	\$ 4.25	\$ 4.50	20.7%	14.500%
\$	1.25	\$ 2,209,708	\$ 4.50	\$ 4.75	27.6%	19.333%
\$	1.50	\$ 3,496,680	\$ 4.75	\$ 5.00	34.5%	24.167%
\$			\$ 5.00	\$ 5.25	41.4%	29.000%

Current Participation and \$.25 Meal Price Increase
\$554,612 possible revenue

Support Opportunities for the Board

- Educate parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders on smart snack nutritional guidelines so that they are perceived more favorably
- Help the community and other stakeholders understand the CNS operating budget and how it impacts the district
- Communicate that the CNS program is an enterprise fund
- Advocate with legislative representatives to maintain and increase state and federal funding sources
- Decide on a financial sustainability plan moving forward. The ultimate goal would be to have a meal price that is equal to the USDA reimbursement amount

Questions ?