

FRAC FACTS

Community Eligibility Provision

An Amazing New Opportunity



The new Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows high poverty schools to offer both breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students while eliminating the traditional school meal application process. CEP benefits students and the school nutrition department's bottom line—it increases participation in the school nutrition programs by offering breakfast and lunch for free to all; reduces administrative work for school districts by eliminating the need to qualify students for free and reduced-price meals and track which children are participating; and improves the overall financial viability of the school nutrition programs in high poverty schools. CEP has been phased in and is currently available

in the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia, and will be available in all states in the 2014-2015 school year.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

- Any school with 40 percent or more “identified students” can participate in CEP. Identified students include children who are directly certified (through data matching) for free meals because they live in households that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), as well as children who are certified for free school meals without submitting a school meal application because of their status as being in foster care, enrolled in Head Start, homeless, runaway, or migrant students.
- Typically, schools with 75 percent or more free and reduced-price certified students will meet the 40 percent identified student requirement. School districts with 40 percent or more identified students may participate district-wide or may group schools together to reach the 40 percent identified student threshold.
- Reimbursements are determined by multiplying the percentage of identified students by 1.6 to determine the percent of meals that will be reimbursed at the free rate. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed for 80 percent of the breakfasts and lunches eaten at the free reimbursement rate and the remaining 20 percent at the paid rate.

IT'S BEEN A SUCCESS IN THE FIRST SEVEN STATES

Based on an evaluation conducted by FRAC and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in the first seven states to implement CEP—the District of Columbia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia—in the 2012-2013 school year:

- 2,273 schools participated in CEP;
- More than 960,000 students attended these schools and benefitted from free school meals; and
- About 10 percent of all students in these seven states attended CEP schools.

PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MEALS INCREASES

In schools that implemented CEP in the 2011-2012 school year in Illinois, Kentucky and Michigan:

- Breakfast participation increased by 25 percent, from 44 percent in October 2010 to 56 percent in October 2012; and
- Lunch participation increased by 13 percent, from 69 percent in October 2010 to 78 percent in October 2012.

For school districts that implement CEP district-wide, like Detroit Public Schools, the effect is further amplified. In Detroit, during the 2011-2012 school year, compared to the previous school year:

- Breakfast participation increased by 15 percent, or 7,400 additional students per day; and
- Lunch participation increased by 30 percent, or nearly 14,000 additional students per day.

IT IMPROVES THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

As a result of expanded student participation and reductions in administrative work, many CEP schools have reported increased revenues, resulting in stronger school nutrition programs overall:

- “Our department’s main goal is to feed students healthy meals so that they are ready to learn. Providing breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students through community eligibility has boosted participation by removing barriers like household applications and collecting fees from students. By feeding more children we are benefiting our school, our students, and our community.” – *Leslie Fowler; Executive Director of Nutrition Support Services, Chicago Public Schools, Illinois*
- “Community eligibility has strengthened our school nutrition program financially by expanding participation and increasing revenue. We now have children eating who never ate school meals before, with an increase of approximately 1 million additional meals served over the school year. We have been able to use the increased revenue to improve school nutrition infrastructure and the quality of the food served to our children.” – *Brenda Fish; Director of School Nutrition, Floyd County Schools, Kentucky*

CEP IS FLOURISHING

As more schools learn about the enormous benefits of CEP from schools that have implemented the provision, the number of schools and districts choosing CEP continues to grow. In the first three states to implement, Illinois, Kentucky, and Michigan, participation in CEP nearly doubled between the first and second years of implementation, from 665 schools serving approximately 285,000 students in the 2011-2012 school year to 1,240 schools serving 520,000 students in the 2012-2013 school year. Across these three states, about two-in-five eligible schools now participate in CEP.

FRAC RESOURCES

Community Eligibility: Making High-Poverty Schools Hunger Free,
http://frac.org/pdf/community_eligibility_report_2013.pdf