

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

June 26, 2018

SUBJECT:

Participation in Community Eligibility Provision

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Per the US Department of Agriculture, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation's highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

A representative from the SCDE Office of School and Nutrition met with School Food Service, Business Services, and Federal Programs staff in early May to discuss possible participation in CEP. District staff reviewed and analyzed pertinent information during the meeting and in subsequent weeks and concluded that this is a win-win-win situation for students, parents, and the District. Key considerations were:

- CEP ensured nutrition for all students at the District's highest poverty schools;
- parents at those schools would no longer complete free/reduced applications and reduced and full pay parents would no longer incur any meal fees; and
- the USDA will reimburse the District at a higher rate than the District's current meal fees, along with fewer free/reduced applications to process and fewer student meal accounts to maintain.

The following schools were accepted by the Superintendent and Senior Staff as CEP participants beginning in the 2018 – 2019 school year:

- Area 1 - Lever Elementary, North Aiken Elementary, East Aiken Elementary, Oakwood-Windsor Elementary
- Area 2 - None qualified
- Area 3 - Jefferson Elementary, Clearwater Elementary, Warrenton Elementary, Gloverville Elementary [Byrd is the only elementary in this attendance area not to qualify.]
- Area 4 - RSM Elementary, RSM Middle, RSM High, Busbee Elementary, Corbett Middle, Wagener-Salley High
- Area 5 - Redcliffe Elementary, Greendale Elementary

CEP participation requires a four year “contract”; however, the SCDE representative noted that there is an escape clause that allows an opt out. The SCDE representative also stated that no participating district had ever chosen to opt out. The deadline for 2018 – 2019 participation is June 30, 2018.

Overall, CEP participation will benefit nearly half of our schools (16), including all of the Area 4 schools and twelve of 20 elementary schools, and approximately 7,000 students.

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept this report as information only

ATTACHMENT:

USDA CEP information sheet

PREPARED BY:

M. O. Traxler III
Karen Johnson
Jeanie Glover

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

What Does It Mean For Your School or Local Educational Agency?

What does it do?

- Allows schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) located in low-income areas to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students
- Eliminates the burden of collecting household applications to determine eligibility for school meal programs

Who benefits? Everyone!

- **Students**
Access to free nutritious meals for all students, no stigma, and less time spent in cashier lines and more time to eat nutritious meals
- **Parents**
No household application means less paperwork and no worries about lunch accounts
- **School staff**
Streamlined meal service operation and more time for students to consume their food
- **Administrators**
Reduced paperwork and administrative costs, no need to track unpaid meal charges, improved program integrity, and more nourished students ready to learn and grow



Who can participate?

- Schools and LEAs with a minimum Identified Student Percentage (≥ 40 percent) in the prior school year

Identified students = those certified for free meals without the use of household applications (for example those directly certified through SNAP).
- Available to:
 - All schools in an LEA
 - A group of schools in an LEA
 - An individual school in an LEA

Background

- Authorized by Congress as a part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.
- Phased in over a period of 3 years, starting with D.C., Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Massachusetts.
- Available nationwide beginning July 1, 2014 (School Year 2014-15).

What must interested schools and LEAs do?

- Meet eligibility requirements.
- Serve free breakfasts and lunches to all students during the 4-year cycle.
- Count total breakfasts and total lunches served to students daily.
- Agree not to collect household applications for school meal programs.
- Determine if non-Federal funds are needed to cover costs above USDA reimbursement.

What do interested schools and LEAs do next?

- Determine if CEP is right for you.
- Contact your State for more information: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/contacts/StateDirectory.htm>.
- If eligible, submit required documentation to your State Agency.