

Community Eligibility

Making High-Poverty Schools Hunger Free



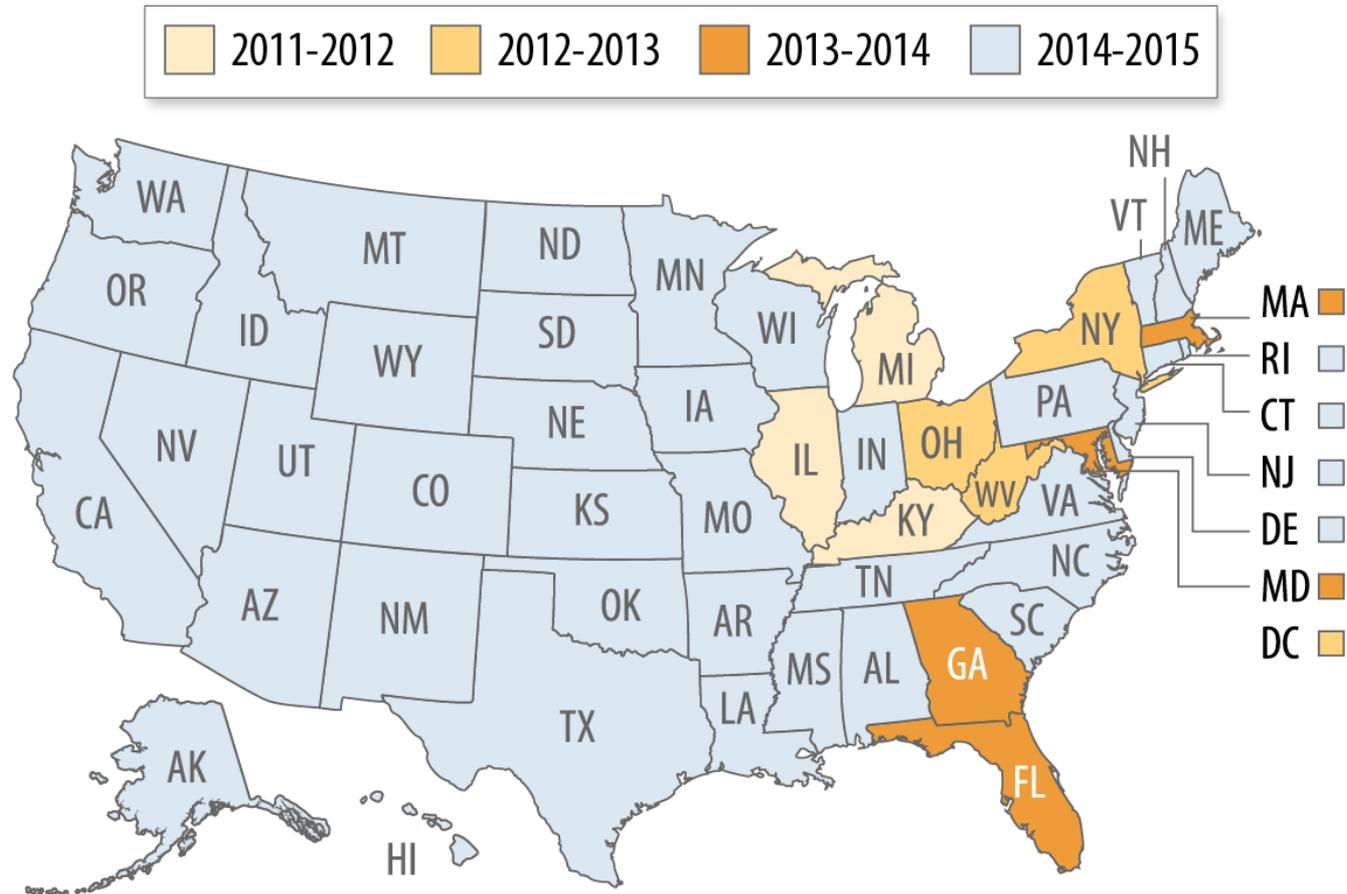
The Link Between Nutrition and Education

- When a child's nutritional needs are met, the child is more attentive in class and has better attendance and fewer disciplinary problems
- The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs meet the nutritional needs of children by providing nutritionally balanced meals that together contain more than half of the nutrients children need each day
- USDA research indicates that children who participate in the National School Lunch Program have superior nutritional intakes compared to those who bring lunch from home or otherwise do not participate
- Low-income children who eat school breakfast have better overall diet quality than those who eat breakfast elsewhere or skip breakfast

What Is Community Eligibility?

- It doesn't make sense for high-poverty schools to go through the standard application process to identify the few children who do *not* qualify for free or reduced-price school meals
- Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 included community eligibility as a new option to allow high-poverty schools to feed more students and focus on meal quality rather than on paperwork
- Community eligibility is designed to be extremely easy for a school or district to adopt and will be available nationwide starting with the 2014-2015 school year

Community Eligibility Is Being Phased In



Source: USDA decisions under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

How Community Eligibility Works

- High-poverty schools provide free breakfasts and lunches to all students without collecting applications
- Any school district can use this option if at least one of its schools has 40 percent or more students certified for free meals without applications (called “Identified Students”)
- Most schools with a 40 percent Identified Student Percentage have 75 percent or more of its students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals
- The district may implement community eligibility in one school, a group of schools or district-wide.
- By May 1, 2014, states must publish lists of all schools that are eligible for community eligibility and all schools that are near-eligible

Who Are “Identified Students”?

Children certified for free meals without submitting a school meal application

Includes 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 Cash Assistance (TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or
- Medicaid (in districts participating in USDA’s demonstration project)

Includes children who are certified for free meals without application because they are

- in foster care
- in Head Start
- are homeless or
- are migrant

Reimbursements Under Community Eligibility

- % Identified Students x 1.6 = % meals reimbursed at “free” rate; the rest are reimbursed at “paid” rate
- Example: a school with 50 percent Identified Students would be reimbursed at the free rate for 80 percent of the breakfasts and lunches it served ($50\% \times 1.6 = 80\%$) and the remaining 20 percent would be reimbursed at the paid rate
- Participating schools are guaranteed to receive the same reimbursement rate (or a higher one if the Identified Student Percentage increases) for 4 years

Meal Reimbursements with Community Eligibility

The reimbursement rate for both lunch and breakfast is determined by multiplying the percent of Identified Students by a 1.6 multiplier. The resulting number is the percent of meals reimbursed at the “free” reimbursement rate, with the rest reimbursed at the “paid” rate.

Percentage Identified Students	Percentage Free	Paid
40%	64%	36%
45%	72%	28%
50%	80%	20%
55%	88%	12%
60%	96%	4%
65%	100%	0

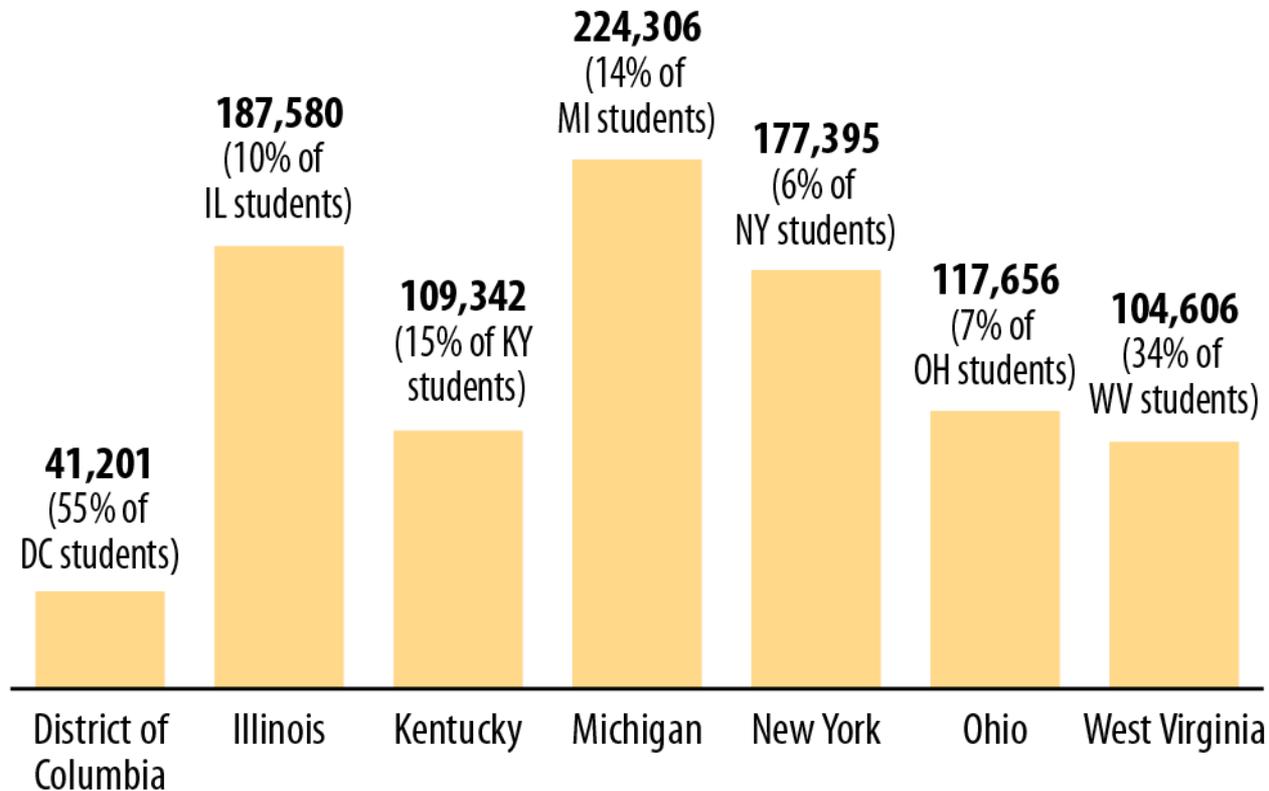
How School Districts Can Participate

- **By individual school**
 - Individual schools with 40% or more Identified Students participate in community eligibility
- **By group**
 - Districts may choose to group schools any way they wish and calculate the free claiming percentage for the group of schools as a whole, using their combined enrollment and total number of Identified Students, as long as the percentage is 40% or higher
 - There is no limit to the number of groups
 - Within the same school district, some schools can participate individually and some can participate as a group
- **By school district**
 - All schools in the district participate as a single group with the same free claiming percentage as long as it is 40% or higher

More Than 2,200 Schools Successfully Implemented Community Eligibility During The 2012-2013 School Year

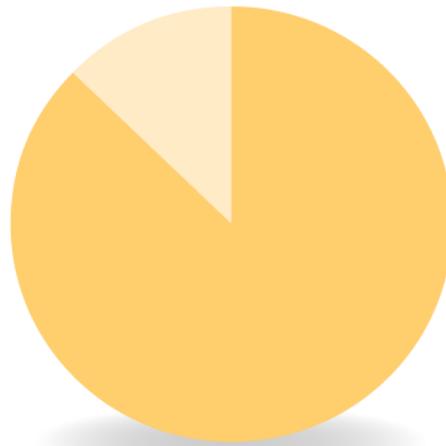
State	Number of Community Eligibility Schools
District of Columbia	122
Illinois	454
Kentucky	267
Michigan	519
New York	326
Ohio	303
West Virginia	282
Total	2,273

Nearly 1 Million Children Are Already Benefitting From Community Eligibility



Source: Center on Budget Policy and Priorities analysis of U.S. Department of Agriculture data, U.S. Department of Education data, and data collected directly from these states

Community Eligibility Helps High-Poverty Schools

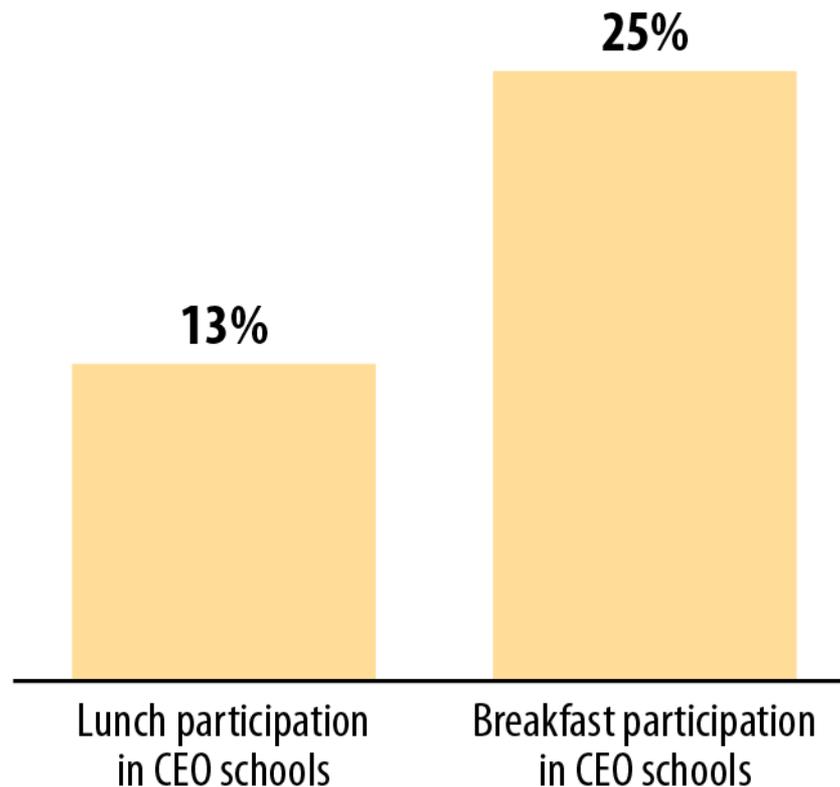


82% of students at community eligibility schools in Illinois, Kentucky, and Michigan were approved for free or reduced-price meals the prior year

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture data and data collected directly from these states

Lunch And Breakfast Participation Increase Under Community Eligibility

Increase in participation between October 2010 and October 2012 in schools that operated under community eligibility for two years



Feedback From Community Eligibility Schools

- All school districts that implemented the option the first year and were surveyed by FRAC would recommend community eligibility to high poverty schools like their own
- School districts report positive feedback from parents and school staff
- Increased ability to feed more students
- Some districts report an increase in revenue



Breakfast In The Classroom

Community eligibility helps schools build stronger breakfast in the classroom programs by making it easier for schools implementing alternative service models — like “grab and go” — to offer breakfast to all students at no charge.

- West Virginia requires all community eligibility schools to implement at least one innovative breakfast strategy — breakfast after the bell, breakfast in the classroom, or “grab and go” breakfast — and breakfast participation increased by 10 percent
- Breakfast participation doubled in Floyd County, KY when it implemented community eligibility and breakfast in the classroom simultaneously
- When Detroit, MI adopted community eligibility, even though it had already implemented breakfast in the classroom in all K-8 schools, breakfast participation increased by 15 percent



Key Steps To Prepare For Implementation

- Promote community eligibility and provide multiple opportunities for school districts to learn about it
- Improve direct certification systems and procedures to identify all children eligible for free school meals without an application
- Set up a work group of staff from the child nutrition agency and different offices within the education department (such as Title I, assessment, school funding, accountability, and E-rate) to address any issues that might arise when school meal applications are not collected
- Prepare to publish lists of eligible schools
- Calculate the financial impact using USDA's calculator that allows districts to estimate their federal reimbursements under community eligibility
- Create simple administrative processes so districts can sign up for community eligibility and submit simplified claims

Community Eligibility Resources

Links to Key USDA and State Materials

<http://frac.org/community-eligibility/>

Brief: An Amazing New Option for Schools

http://frac.org/pdf/community_eligibility_amazing_new_option_schools.pdf

Community Eligibility: A Powerful Tool in the Fight Against Child Hunger

http://frac.org/pdf/community_eligibility_report_summary_2013.pdf

A Guide to Implementing Community Eligibility

http://frac.org/pdf/community_eligibility_report_summary_2013.pdf

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