

School Meal Access & Participation

California Statewide Summary | 2013-14



3 in 5 public school students in California are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals.



The National School Lunch Program reaches 2.3 million (or 67%) of California's low-income students. An additional 1.1 million students in need could be served a free or low-cost school lunch each day.

Nearly 20% of California's K-12 public schools don't serve breakfast at all. Most schools that do offer breakfast only serve it early in the morning before the first bell rings. Students who can't get to school early aren't able to eat.



That means on an average school day, 2.2 million (or 65%) of the state's most vulnerable students miss out on the health and academic benefits of school breakfast.



Integrating breakfast into the school day with after-the-bell service models significantly increases student participation.

\$344 million

California public schools would receive an additional \$344 million in federal meal reimbursements if their breakfast programs reached as many low-income students as their lunch programs.

Children who participate in the school meal programs tend to have healthier diets than their peers.^{1,2,3} School nutrition standards now call for more fruit, vegetables, and whole grains than ever before, along with reductions in sodium, fat, and excess calories.⁴



K-12 California Public Schools ⁵	2013-14
Student Enrollment	5,666,560
Low-Income Students (Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals) ⁶	3,382,839
Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals	60%
Students Who Participate in School Lunch	2,774,209
Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Lunch	2,273,209
Percent of Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Lunch	67%
Students Who Participate in School Breakfast	1,350,148
Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Breakfast	1,191,400
Percent of Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Breakfast	35%
Additional Federal Meal Reimbursements Received if School Breakfast Reached as Many Low-Income Students as School Lunch	\$344,034,871

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¹ CFPA's Benefits of Breakfast Fact Sheet: <http://breakfastfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/BenefitOfBreakfast-Factsheet-2013.pdf>

² Robinson-O'Brien R, Burgess-Champoux T, Haines J, Hannan PJ, Neumark-Sztainer D. Associations between school meals offered through the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program and fruit and vegetable intake among ethnically diverse, low-income children. *J Sch Health*. 2010;80(10):487-92

³ Johnston CA, Moreno JP, El-Mubasher A, Woehler D. School lunches and lunches brought from home: a comparative analysis. *Child Obes*. 2012 Aug;8(4):364-8

⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, *USDA Unveils Historic Improvements to Meals Served in America's Schools*: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/002312>

Technical Notes

This analysis was conducted by California Food Policy Advocates using California Department of Education data for the 2013-14 school year.

Participation statistics reflect average daily participation. All values in the table above are rounded to the nearest whole number.

⁵ For the purposes of this analysis, "public schools" excludes county office of education sites, state special schools, and charter schools. Charter schools are currently exempt from many sections of the California Education Code, including the requirement that schools make one nutritionally adequate, free or reduced-price meal available to each low-income student each school day.

The school meal participation and reimbursement data included in this analysis refer to the operation of the federal School Breakfast Program (SBP) and/or the National School Lunch (NSLP) Program by public schools from October 2013 through April 2014.

⁶ The data in this row describe the number of students reported as being eligible for free or reduced-price (FRP) meals as of October 2013. Data on FRP eligibility were downloaded from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filespp.asp>.

- Income guidelines for students eligible to receive free and reduced-price school meals:
 - Free meal category: household income at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG)
 - Reduced-price category: household income between 130% and 185% of FPG
- Foster, migrant, runaway, and homeless children and children from households participating in CalFresh, CalWORKs, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation are considered categorically eligible to receive free school meals.