

School's Out...Who Ate?

Executive Summary

California Food Policy Advocates' annual report, *School's Out...Who Ate?*, tracks progress and trends in summer nutrition for low-income children in California. The major finding is that in July 2010, 15 percent fewer children benefited from nutritious, federally funded lunches than in July 2009; nearly 25 percent fewer than in July 2008; and a full 50 percent fewer than in July 2002. Significant declines in the availability of summer school, due to state budget cuts, explain much of the reduced participation.

Legislators recognize that summer school cuts eliminate valuable opportunities for academic enrichment, but few policymakers consider the nutritional impact of summer school reductions. The summer nutrition gap jeopardizes the health and academic success of the 2 million low-income students in California who ate a free or reduced price school lunch during the academic year but did not benefit from the federal summer nutrition programs.

More work is needed at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure all eligible children have access to healthy, affordable meals when school is out. Highlights of this report's recommendations are listed below:

- State Superintendent Torlakson should convene a summer learning summit to develop legislative, policy and fiscal solutions to the summer learning (and nutrition) gap.
- The Legislature and Governor should enact SB 429 (DeSaulnier) to provide school districts with increased flexibility to devote resources to summer programs.
- The Legislature should require the state to collect and track data describing the availability of summer school and summer learning programs.
- Local boards of education should consider the impact of summer school reductions and the transition away from year round, multi-track calendars on students' nutritional needs and take steps to mitigate the consequences, such as clear communication to families about options for free lunch sites.
- Local school food services departments should work with local community leaders and organizations to vend meals and disseminate information to students about available lunch sites.

Included in the full report are detailed federal, state, and local recommendations; an analysis of data trends; policy updates; and county-by-county data tables.