

For Immediate Release

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Primary contact: Justin Rausa, 951.236.4222

Los Angeles contact: Matthew Sharp, 213.482.8200

LESS THAN ONE DECADE LATER, SUMMER MEAL PARTICIPATION HALVED

Advocates find that cuts to summer school threaten child nutrition.

[Oakland, CA] – According to a new report released today, more than 80% (two million) of California's children who ate subsidized school lunches during the last academic year did not eat lunch served through the federal summer nutrition programs in July 2010. The report by California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), entitled [*School's Out... Who Ate? A Report on Summer Nutrition in California*](#), pinpoints budget cuts to summer school as the main reason why low-income children lost access to free, nourishing meals last summer.

"California's summer nutrition gap is alarming not only because it represents harm to the health of our children but because it reflects a loss of summer learning and enrichment, which affects academic achievement across the entire year," says Kenneth Hecht, CFPA's Executive Director.

CFPA's analysis of data provided by the California Department of Education shows that participation in federal summer lunch programs decreased approximately 50% from 2002 to 2010. This decline means that over 400,000 students that ate a nutritious lunch each day in July 2002, no longer participate in the summer nutrition programs. In addition, sites serving meals through school-based summer nutrition programs fell by more than half from July 2009 to July 2010, leaving fewer than 4,200 sites statewide. This loss of access to healthy summer meals threatens children's nutrition and health, as well as their academic achievement.

The Food Research and Action Center report [*Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2011*](#) estimates that low participation in summer nutrition programs costs California over \$33 million in lost federal funding each summer.

School's Out... Who Ate? is an annual report published by California Food Policy Advocates, a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization. The report includes participation data for all 58 counties, which can be found [here](#). The report also includes federal, state, and local recommendations for policymakers to close the summer nutrition gap, including:

- Convene a summer learning summit to address the gaps in summer programs and summer nutrition;
- Require collection and tracking of basic data on summer school and summer programs; and
- Inform families of available summer lunch sites.

Children need access to nutritious summer meals that combat hunger, support learning, and help prevent obesity. With participation in federal summer meal programs halved in less than a decade, and families across California still struggling with the effects of the recession, 3.3 million low-income children are at risk of hunger. Policymakers should take responsibility for closing this gap.

To find the nearest summer meal location, click [here](#).

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