



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

CEP Meal Program Incentive Report

H259 – 2023 Appropriations Act

S.L. 2023 – 134, sec.7.59(g)

Date Due: ---January 1, 2025
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2024-2025

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION VISION

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H 259-2023 Appropriations ACT, SL 2023 – 134

CEP Meal Incentive Program

Section 7.59 of S.L. 2023 – 134 required the Department of Public (DPI) to establish the Community Eligibility Provision Meal Program Incentive for the 2024 – 2025 fiscal biennium to expand public school participation in the Federally assisted Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to increase the number of students with access to healthy school meals, including breakfast and lunch, at no cost to students. The incentive program is to be available to eligible public school units for the 2024 – 2025 fiscal year.

In accordance with Session Law, a public school unit was considered eligible to participate in the incentive program if the school qualified for the CEP but did not participate in the CEP during the 2023 – 2024 fiscal year. The DPI developed an application process that included all elements established in Session Law, including the name of the school, the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the school for the 2024 – 2025 school year, the projected number of students enrolled in the school for the 2024 – 2025 school year and meal participation rates for breakfast and lunch for the 2023 – 2024 school year. The application enabled School Food Authorities to apply for their eligible school sites to be considered for the meal incentive program. School Food Authorities submitted applications in a timely manner and the applications were reviewed by the Office of School Nutrition. Data submitted on the application were verified for accuracy using the School Nutrition Technology System which is the authoritative source for School Nutrition data elements.

Schools were selected for participation in the pilot program in collaboration with the School Food Authorities. School Food Authorities were required to make decisions concerning the grouping of eligible schools in order to generate maximum Federal funds from the CEP. Consistent with Session Law, the Office of School Nutrition prioritized the award of CEP Meal Incentive Grant funds to schools with an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) greater than 55%, followed by schools that would draw the greatest amount of Federal CEP funds. Any school selected for the meal incentive program was required to offer innovative breakfast options, including breakfast after the bell and in the where possible, in the classroom. Grant funds are intended to provide State funding reimbursement that is not funded by Federal School Nutrition funds.

In addition to the description of the CEP Meal Incentive Program application process described above, this report contains preliminary information about the reporting requirements of the pilot project. Complete and accurate data will not be available for items (3) and (4) until six weeks after the close of the fiscal year. Session Law requires the DPI to report the following:

(1) The number of schools that utilized the CEP Meal Incentive Program:

DPI Response: Based on the criteria established in Session Law, 157 schools were deemed eligible to utilize the CEP Meal Incentive Program funds in SY 2024 – 2025. All schools are currently participating in the program.

(2) The number of students that received meals at no cost to the student under the CEP Meal Incentive Program:

DPI Response: It is estimated that 48,550 students enrolled in the 157 participating schools who were classified as eligible for paid meals, are now eligible to receive breakfast and lunch meals at school at no cost to the student.

(3) The amount of Federal and State funds participating public school units received:

DPI Response: Due to the reimbursement nature of the School Nutrition Programs, this information is not yet available. This information will be available when an amended report is filed in August 2025.

(4) Any increase on student success due to the school's utilization of the incentive and participation in the program:

DPI Response: Due to the reimbursement nature of the School Nutrition Programs, this information is not yet available. This information will be available when an amended report is filed in August 2025.