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voices for children IN NEBRASKA

Food for Thought: School Nutrition for Student Performance

Healthy child development is essential to community and economic prosperity. Research confirms what educators and parents have always known: childhood hunger has long-term and detrimental effects on cognition, physical and mental health, academic performance, and behavior.[1,2] Although child poverty in the state has begun to recover from recession lows, household food insecurity has continued to rise, to 1 in 7 Nebraska households.[3]

Schools are the foundation of our investments in children, and for decades, have provided a healthy nutrition environment to all children through school meal program. Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program has offered federal reimbursements for lunches served to children in public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. In order to receive reimbursements for meals, states must meet nutritional requirements and offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible children.[4] The Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees and administers the program through state education agencies, and programs are operated by school food authorities. Today, federal child nutrition programs also include the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.

Child Hunger is Detrimental to Student Performance

Healthy development during the critical period of childhood depends upon consistent access to proper nutrition. The stress of hunger in childhood has been linked to a variety of adverse outcomes ranging from physiological to behavioral. Studies have consistently shown that children living in food-insecure households are more likely to have poor physical, behavioral, and mental health outcomes.[5] Food insecurity has also been shown to predict diminished academic performance, cognition, and psychosocial functioning.[6,7] Although consistent access to food is related to poverty, research illustrates that the two stressors operate separately, where children who are from households that are both low-income and food-insecure demonstrate poor outcomes at significantly higher rates than low-income children who did not experience hunger.[8]

1. Katie Adolphus, Clare L. Lawton, and Louise Dye, "The Effects of Breakfast on Behavior and Academic Performance in Children and Adolescents," Frontiers in Human Neuroscience 7 (2013): 425, doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2013.00425.
2. Linda Weinreb, et al., "Hunger: Its Impact on Children's Health and Mental Health," Pediatrics 110, no. 4 (2002), doi: 10.1542/peds.110.4.e41.
3. Voices for Children in Nebraska, Kids Count in Nebraska 2015 Report.
4. Children in households with incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible for free meals and those in households with incomes between 130% and 185% of FPL are eligible for reduced-price meals, which may cost no more than $0.40 for lunch and $0.30 for breakfast. Categorical eligibility, known as "direct certification" for free meals applies to children who are in households participating in other public programs.
5. Council on Community Pediatrics and Committee on Nutrition, "Promoting Food Insecurity for All Children," Pediatrics 136, no. 5 (2015), doi: 10.1542/peds.2015-3301.
6. Howard Taras, "Nutrition and Student Performance at School," J Sch Health 75, no. 6 (2005):199-213.
7. Weinreb, et al., 7.
8. Ronald E. Kleinman, et al., "Hunger in Children in the United States: Potential Behavioral and Emotional Correlates," Pediatrics 101, no. 1 (1998), 4-5.

New research suggests that food insecurity may even affect decision-making processes in teenagers. Researchers have found that older children experiencing food insecurity often cope by employing strategies that offer short-term survival, but are self-sabotaging in the long-term. These coping strategies include failing classes to receive meals in summer school, engaging in survival sex, stealing, and saving school meals for younger siblings. As one young girl stated, "a lot of people are choosing to be in jail rather than be on the street."[9] From the perspective of a young teen who has been constantly under the distress of hunger and material hardship, incarceration seems to offer the best source of stability in access to food and shelter.

The evidence paints a bleak future for some of our children and tells us that there is much to be done to ensure that students reach their full potential in the classroom. Academic and lifelong success is inseparable from physical and mental health in childhood, and the existing body of research suggests that investing in solutions to child hunger would return significant improvements in student performance and well-being.

School Meals in Nebraska: Landscape & Financing

The federal child nutrition programs have effectively kept students equipped to learn with nutritious meals during the school day for decades. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) serve all children enrolled in school, but are especially important for children from low-income households. Federal reimbursements are paid for all meals served, with higher rates for meals served to students eligible for free and reduced-price (FRP) meals based on household income (Table 1). In 2014, Nebraska received over $74 million in federal reimbursements for FRP meals, while state funds accounted for just 1% of expenditures for FRP meals. The state currently provides an additional $0.05 reimbursement in state aid for each breakfast served.[10]

In the 2013 school year, 138,348 Nebraska students eligible for FRP meals were served (Table 2), with an estimated 2,480,634 lunches and 996,265 breakfasts served at the FRP rate in a single month. Together, the NSLP and SBP have been successful in keeping kids focused on learning throughout the school day.[11]

Table 1. Federal Reimbursements for School Meals

SY 2016-17[12]	Lunch[13]	Breakfast[14]
Free	$3.16	$1.71
Reduced	$2.76	$1.41
Paid	$0.30	$0.29

Table 2. Federal Reimbursements Support Child Nutrition in Nebraska[15]

FRP Meals FY 2014	Breakfast	Lunch	Total
Federal Funds	$14,799,419.30	$59,663,732.57	$74,463,151.87
State Funds	$518,555.48	$392,032.00	$910,587.48
Total Expenditures	$15,317,974.78	$60,055,764.57	$75,373,739.35
Total Meals Served in October 2014	2,480,634	996,265	3,476,899

Issue 1. Breakfast Matters: The Cost of Low Participation

School breakfast ensures that students begin the day ready to learn, but many schools do not offer breakfast due to the cost of low participation. The viability of school meal programs relies heavily on revenue from federal reimbursements for FRP meals. Low participation rates represent a missed opportunity in feeding more students and in receiving higher federal reimbursements. About 26.7% of schools do not offer lunch in the state, while 32.6% of schools that do not provide breakfast (Table 3).

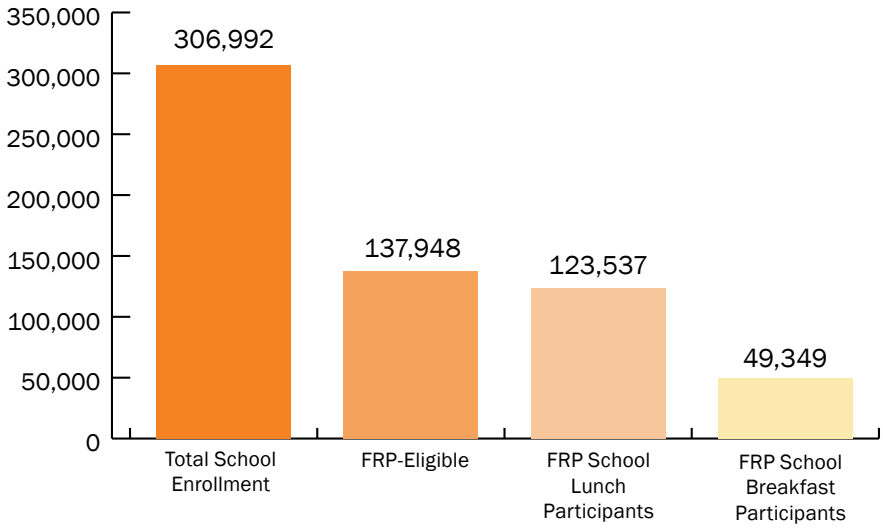
Table 3. Many Students in Nebraska Lack Access to Breakfast (SY 2013/14)

Public School Districts Providing...[16]	Lunch		Breakfast	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Districts	249	5	232	22
Sites	750	273	689	334

9. Susan J. Popkin, Molly M. Scott, and Martha Galvez, "Impossible Choices: Teens and Food Insecurity in America," Urban Institute and Feeding America, September 2016, http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000914-Impossible-Choices-Teens-and-Food-Insecurity-in-America.pdf, 21.
10. Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-10,138.
11. Jayanta Bhattacharya, Janet Currie, and Steven J. Haider, "Evaluating the Impact of School Nutrition Programs," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2004, http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1675404/efan04008.pdf.
12. U.S. Department of Agriculture, "School Programs Meal, Snack and Milk Payments to States and School Food Authorities," http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SY2015-16table.pdf.

Lunch participation for FRP-eligible students remains relatively high across the country and in Nebraska, while breakfast participation rates vary widely. Lunch participation rates can thus be utilized as benchmark and target for breakfast participation. In SY 2013/14, 89.6% of public school students eligible for FRP meals participated in school lunch, while only 35.8% participated in school breakfast. Nebraska ranks near-last in this comparison, with only about 4 FRP-eligible students participating in breakfast for every 10 participating in lunch.[17]

Chart 1.School Breakfast Participation is Low in Nebraska (SY 2013/14)[18]



Cost Estimate

Research shows that economies of scale in school breakfasts and lunches are intertwined, where costs of providing breakfast are significantly higher when there is an imbalance in the breakfast to lunch ratio. Although breakfast and lunch are very similar products, serving a smaller volume of breakfasts relative to lunches necessitates operational inefficiencies in labor and supply, resulting in a higher per-unit cost for breakfast.[19]

Achieving a "meal service balance," where the numbers of breakfasts and lunches served are the same, would yield significant savings in breakfast costs. Although savings are projected across the board with greater quantities of breakfast served, production costs are another important aspect in attaining an economy of scale in breakfast programs. Geography and urbanicity contribute significantly to cost differences, where variations in labor and food costs can significantly affect profitability for a school food authority (SFA), alongside other factors, such as total enrollment.[20]

An analysis conducted by the Economic Research Service of the USDA modeled the cost of breakfast with a meal service balance, where the number of lunches and breakfasts is equal, in each of the region-locales defined by the FNS. In the Midwest, costs per breakfast were lowered by $1.10, $1.02, and $0.70 in subruban, rural, and urban areas, respectively (Table 4).[21]

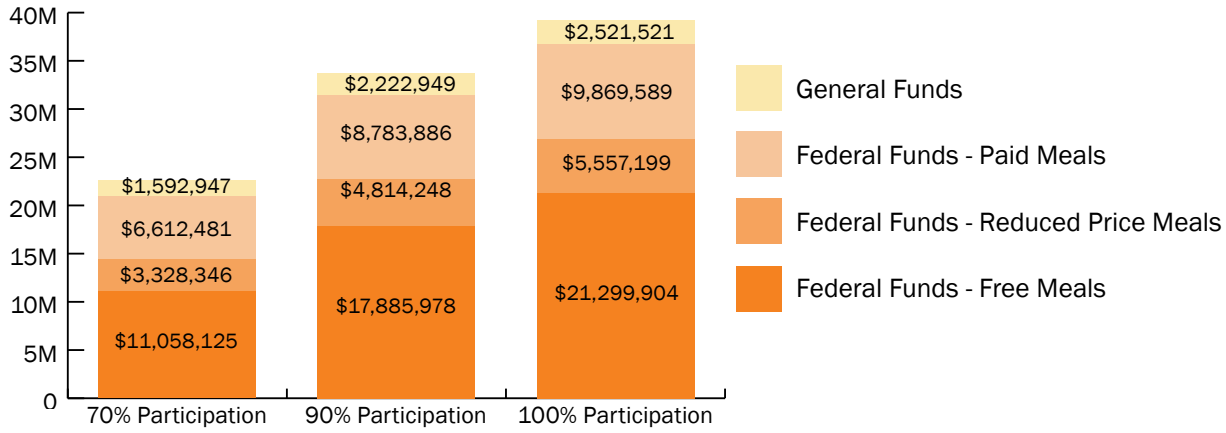
Table 4. Increased Breakfast Participate Reduces Cost for Schools

Costs by Urbanicity	Average Cost Index for Midwest		Estimated "Balanced" Breakfast Cost
	Cost Per Lunch	Cost Per Breakfast	
Rural Midwest	$0.90	$1.82	$0.80
Suburban Midwest	$1.28	$2.19	$1.09
Urban Midwest	$0.95	$1.47	$0.77

13. Schools in which 60% or more of lunches were served at the FRP rate receive an additional $0.02 reimbursement for every FRP and paid lunch served.
14. Schools in which 40% or more of lunches were served at the FRP rate receive an additional $0.33 reimbursement for every FRP breakfast served.
15. Data obtained from Nebraska Department of Education.
16. Ibid.
17. Jessie Hewins, "School Breakfast Scorecard: 2014-2015 School Year," Food Research and Action Center, Feburary 2016, http://frac.org/pdf/School_Breakfast_Scorecard_SY_2014_2015.pdf.
18. "Table 204.10," Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.10.asp?current=yes; Hewins, "School Breakfast Scorecard."
19. Michael Ollinger and Joanne Guthrie, "Economies of Scale, the Lunch-Breakfast Ratio, and the Cost of USDA School Breakfasts and Lunches," ERR-196, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, November 2015, http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1935405/err-196.pdf.
20. Michael Ollinger, Katherine Ralston, and Joanne Guthrie, "School Foodservice Costs: Location Matters," ERR-117, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, May 2011, http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/127642/err117.pdf.
21. Ollinger and Guthrie, "Economies of Scale, the Lunch-Breakfast Ratio, and the Cost of USDA School Breakfasts and Lunches," 23-24.

Reaching parity in numbers of breakfasts and lunches served would significantly increase the amount of federal reimbursements received. Based on available data, increasing SBP participation rates to 70% would bring nearly $20 million in additional federal funds in a year. Bringing breakfast participation rates to match lunch participation would generate over $31 million in additional federal reimbursements (Chart 2).[22]

Chart 2. Increasing Breakfast Participation Would Generate Millions in Additional Reimbursements



Recommendation 1: Incentivize Universal Free Meals in High-Poverty Schools

Offering universal-free school breakfast in schools is a proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation.[23] Several options are supported by federal funds, particularly for high-poverty schools, where free breakfast can have the greatest impact. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a new federal option for certain high-poverty districts and schools to serve free breakfasts and lunches to all students without collecting school meal applications. Just two years after CEP became available nationwide, 50% of all eligible schools have implemented the option, a testament to its early successes. Meanwhile, only 8% of eligible Nebraska schools adopted CEP in SY 2015/16, or 9 of 112 eligible schools, putting the state second-to-last in the country.[24]

Keeping Schools Hunger-Free with CEP

The Community Eligibility Provision became available to all schools in the country beginning in SY 2014-15 after a pilot period. Schools and districts are eligible if their identified student percentage (ISP), or students who are certified for free school meals through participation in other public programs, accounts for 40% or more of the total student population.[25] In lieu of collecting applications, CEP schools utilize a USDA-determined multiplier, currently set at 1.6, to represent an approximate number of FRP-eligible students in a school based on the number of identified students.[26] The multiplier is applied to the ISP to determine federal reimbursements to be paid at the free lunch rate, while the remainder is reimbursed at the paid rate. The results reported by schools that have adopted CEP are extremely promising:[27,28]

- Increased participation in school meals, particularly for breakfast (nearly 10% increase)
- Reduced paperwork for administrators and staff
- Streamlining of meal service operations
- Improved fiscal viability of food service programs

22. Calculated from data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education and FRAC Breakfast Scorecard. Due to data masking for some district-level FRP data, projections may be underestimates.
23. Lawrence S. Bernstein, et al., "Evaluation of the School Breakfast Program Pilot Project: Final Report," Submitted by Abt Associates to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, December 2004, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SBPPFinal.pdf.
24. Becca Segal, et al., "Community Eligibility Adoption Rises for the 2015-2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals," Center for Budget and Policy Priorities and Food Research and Action Center, May 2016, http://frac.org/pdf/take-up-of-cep-report.pdf.
25. Referred to as ISP (identified student percentage), this population includes children living in households participating in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or those who have been found to be homeless, migrant, in foster care, or enrolled in Head Start.
26. That is, for every 10 Identified Students, there are typically 6 additional students qualifying for FRP meals based on household income.
27. Madeleine Levin and Zoë Neuberger, "Community Eligibility: Making High-Poverty Schools Hunger Free," Food Research and Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 2013, http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/10-1-13fa.pdf.
28. Christopher W. Logan, et al., "Community Eligibility Provision Evaluation," Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, February 2014, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/CEPEvaluation.pdf, 104.

As of the most recent school year, only 7.6% of Nebraska students enrolled at CEP-eligible schools benefitted from the increased access to breakfast and lunch under the provision. If all eligible schools took advantage of CEP, an estimated 37,062 Nebraska students, and up to 45,159 more, would have the opportunity to have two nutritious meals during each school day.[29] In addition to feeding more students in high-poverty schools, increased adoption of CEP would bring many parts of the state closer to a meal service balance, and allow more schools to utilize alternative breakfast delivery models.

The low take-up of CEP in Nebraska is thought to have been due to uncertainty about state education funding implications in the absence of school meal data. The calculation of poverty allowances for schools relies on the number of students qualifying for free lunch only, while the USDA multiplier of 1.6 estimates the number of students eligible for free *and* reduced-price meals. This issue was addressed through state legislation in 2016 by allowing schools adopting CEP to approximate free lunch and free milk students for the purposes of state aid utilizing a 1.1 multiplier, unless that number was calculated to be less than the number of qualifying students from the previous year, thus preventing a loss in state aid.[30]

In order to ensure that CEP is maximized in the state, it will be important to continue monitoring CEP adoption to identify any further obstacles facing eligible districts or schools. Particular attention should be paid to concerns that the 1.1 state multiplier may not accurately approximate free lunch students across the state. Additionally, the utility of the provision allowing for the use of the free lunch count from the most recent year prior to CEP adoption should be closely examined, as it may not capture fluctuations in student population and poverty throughout the 4-year CEP cycle.

In early 2016, Nebraska was selected to participate in a USDA demonstration project to evaluate the effectiveness of conducting direct certification with Medicaid data. The process of direct certification uses other sources of data available to the state for the purposes of FRP verification. The data matching gleaned from Medicaid participants is expected to increase the number of students directly certified, thereby pushing many near-eligible schools and districts to be CEP-eligible.[31]

For schools that determine that CEP is not the right fit, or for those ineligible for CEP, Provision 2 is another federal option available to all schools upon approval by the Nebraska Department of Education. Provision 2 allows schools to serve free breakfast through a four-year cycle, while only collecting meal applications for the first "base year." Under this provision, the loss of revenue from paid and reduced-price households is offset by administrative cost savings, federal reimbursements, and reduced production costs.[32] As a result, Provision 2 is likely most optimal for schools with relatively high FRP-eligible student populations.

Recommendation 2: Increase Breakfast Participation through Innovative Delivery Models

Alternative breakfast delivery models address time and convenience barriers to breakfast participation. Breakfast in the classroom, a grab-and-go option, or a second breakfast period creates an easier breakfast opportunity for students who are unable to arrive early for breakfast in the cafeteria due to bus schedules or busy family schedules. Among universal-free breakfast sites, breakfast participation increases and lowered production costs were strongest among schools that provided breakfast in the classroom.[33]

29. Nebraska Department of Education, "District Level Community Eligibility Provision Annual Notification (SY 2016-17)," https://www.education.ne.gov/ns/NSLP/CEP/SP26-2016aNE-District.pdf. Schools are categorized as "eligible" (ISP > 40%) or "near-eligible" (ISP > 30%) based on proxy data gathered by NDE.
30. Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-1003(18).
31. Lara Hulsey, et al., "Year 2 Demonstration Impacts of Using Medicaid Data to Directly Certify Students for Free School Meals," Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/DirectCertwithMedicaidYear2.pdf.
32. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Provision 2 Guidance: National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs," 2002, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/prov2guidance.pdf.
33. Ibid., 21.

Currently, privately-funded grants are available to Nebraska schools for start-up equipment, alongside a statewide School Breakfast Challenge to increase breakfast participation in the state. Last year, 61 schools registered for the challenge, with all 61 increasing participation by at least 25%, and 5 schools increasing participation by more than 100%.[34]

Issue 2. Hunger after the Bell: Afterschool and Summer Meals

School breakfasts and lunches have demonstrated great success in ensuring that children are not distracted by hunger in the classroom. Nevertheless, many children from low-income families remain at risk of experiencing the effects of hunger after the school day and during the summer months. Studies have shown significant seasonal variations in food insecurity for households with school-age children, evidence that families struggle to replace school meals during the summer months.[35] The heightened risk of experiencing the adverse consequences of hunger when school is not in session still affects student performance during the school year.

Federal reimbursements are available through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for afterschool meals and snacks, and through the NSLP for afterschool snacks. Similarly, during the summer months, federal reimbursements are available for meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. Some afterschool and summer nutrition options are available to non-school entities, such as local parks and recreation agencies, summer camps, libraries, and nonprofit organizations. Federal reimbursement rates for afterschool and summer nutrition programs are relatively high. For sites participating in CACFP, SFSP, and SSO that are deemed eligible based on the percentage of FRP-eligible in their area, all meals and snacks served are reimbursed at the free rate, and are available at no cost to children served.[36]

Table 5. Many Options are Available to Reduce Child Hunger After School and During Summer

USDA Program		Eligible Sponsors	Eligibility for Reimbursement at Free Rate	Service	Reimbursement at Free Rate
Afterschool	CACFP	Schools, local government agencies, afterschool programs run by nonprofits	Area where 50% of students in a local school are qualified for FRP meals	Up to one meal and one snack per day; afterschool, weekends, school holidays	Breakfast: $1.66 Lunch and Supper: $3.07 Snack: $0.84
	NSLP	SFA participating in NSLP	Area where at least 50% of enrolled children are FRP-eligible (otherwise reimbursed and priced individually based on FRP data); must operate educational or enrichment activities	Snacks	Snack: $0.86
Summer	SFSP	Schools, local government agencies, nonprofits	Area where 50% of students in a local school are qualified for FRP meals or by Census data; OR where 50% of children in program are FRP-eligible	Up to two meals per day (except for migrant sites and camps for FRP-eligible meals only); summer months and student vacations	Breakfast: $2.09 Lunch and Supper: $3.69 Snack: $0.87 (higher rates for rural and self-prep sites)
	SSO – NSLP	SFA participating in NSLP	Area where 50% of students in a local school are qualified for FRP meals or by Census data; OR where 50% of children in program are FRP-eligible	Up to two meals per day (except for migrant sites and camps for FRP-eligible meals only); summer months and student vacations	Breakfast: $1.71 Lunch: $3.16 Snack: $0.82

34. Action for Healthy Kids, "Feeding Nebraska's Students: The Nebraska School Breakfast Challenge," http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/success-stories/1601.
35. Mark Nord and Kathleen Romig, "Hunger in the Summer: Seasonal Food Insecurity and the National School Lunch and Summer Food Service Programs," Journal of Children & Poverty 12, no. 2 (2006):141-158, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10796120600879582.
36. Clarissa Hayes, "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report," Food Research and Action Center, June 2016, http://frac.org/pdf/2016_summer_nutrition_report.pdf.
37. Center for Best Practices, "To Meet Need, Growth in Afterschool Snacks and Meals Must Continue," No Kid Hungry, https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/afterschool_snacks_meals_history_and_trends.pdf, 8.

Afterschool and summer child nutrition programs meet an important need in our communities with high concentrations of children living in poverty, while requiring minimal state funding. In addition to mitigating child hunger outside of school hours, federal reimbursements for meals and administrative costs also boost local economies. Still, summer nutrition programs are highly underutilized, and last year, Nebraska ranked near-last in the country, with only 8.5 summer nutrition participants for every 100 participants in NSLP.[36] Similarly, only about 7.5 afterschool snacks or meals were served for every 100 lunches served to children eligible for the CACFP or NSLP afterschool programs.[38]

Cost Estimate

Much of the costs of afterschool and summer child nutrition programs are borne by federal funds. Since 2013, state General Funds have been available to incentivize the initiation or expansion of the SFSP through grants for nonrecurring expenses incurred by approved sponsors, such as for new equipment.[39] In the inaugural year of the state SFSP grant, only 425 students were served through 2 sponsors in 9 sites; the most recent year's report shows about 1,085 students served through 7 sponsors in 11 sites.[40] The grant allows for up to $140,000 in total to be awarded on a competitive basis each fiscal year, with individual annual grants of up to $15,000 for each awardee.

Higher utilization of the available afterschool and summer programs would mean fewer kids go hungry, while also returning increased federal reimbursements to be utilized primarily in communities with high needs. It is estimated that if participation in summer nutrition programs alone reached just 40% of lunch participation, local communities across Nebraska would stand to benefit from over $2.8 million in additional federal reimbursements.[41] The same increase in afterschool meals and snacks to match 40% of FRP lunches served would result in an estimated $7.7 million in additional federal reimbursements.[42]

Recommendation 1. Reduce Barriers to Use of State SFSP Expansion Grants

Summer nutrition program sponsors receive outreach and technical support from the Nebraska Department of Education, and those providing SFSP meals are eligible to apply for state-funded grants intended to incentivize new sites and expand the reach of existing ones. The number of children served by awardees of the grant served has grown since the inaugural year of the grant in 2013 from 425 to 1,085 children reported in 2015.[43]

Currently, existing statute has been interpreted as requiring sponsors to only seek funding on a pro-rated basis for expenditures that are only associated with SFSP.[44] Therefore, in practice, a local community center seeking funding for coolers and staff training to become a new sponsor would only be able to budget 3 months of use for the cooler. As such, the center could only request a grant to cover $300 of a $1,200 cooler. This may be cost-prohibitive to new sponsors or those seeking to expand their programming. Clarifying existing statute to explicitly state that sponsors may apply for funding for investments that are utilized outside of the three months of summer for other child nutrition programming would allow greater flexibility in the use of funds for nonprofits and government agencies interested in the program, while also building the capacity and reach of other child nutrition programs.

37. Center for Best Practices, "To Meet Need, Growth in Afterschool Snacks and Meals Must Continue," No Kid Hungry, https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/afterschool_snacks_meals_history_and_trends.pdf, 8.
38. Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-10,141.
39. Nebraska Department of Education Memorandum to the Education Committee of the Nebraska Legislature, October 2015 and November 2013. Available from: www.nebraskalegislature.gov.
40. Hayes, "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation," 19.
41. Calculations based on an increase of current afterschool snacks and meals served to 40% of current FRP lunches served from data available at: https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/afterschool_snacks_meals_history_and_trends.pdf. Calculations assume increases are distributed evenly among CACFP supper, CACFP snack, and NSLP snack at current reimbursement rates. Reimbursements for CACFP and NSLP snacks are similar, but an increase focused on CACFP supper would yield significantly increase this estimate.

Recommendation 2. Increase Afterschool Meals through Innovation and Expansion

A state investment in afterschool meals and snacks, similar to the grants extended to summer meals sponsors, can strengthen access to nutritious meals for at-risk children outside of the regular school day. In addition to start-up and expansion grants, funding to incentivize creative service models would leverage existing afterschool educational and enrichment programs towards reducing child hunger afterschool, on the weekends, and during school holidays.

Afterschool meal delivery programs are relatively underutilized across the country, but some schools and entities have employed innovative strategies to increase access to healthy meals in low-income communities. Although sites must provide educational or enrichment activities to be eligible for the CACFP afterschool programs, the USDA has clarified that there is no requirement that all children receiving the meals must be participants in the activity.[45] The Umbrella Model, which has been used in largely school-based settings, makes the most of the intent of the program to provide a safe place for children to go afterschool in communities that need it the most. Under the model, sites increased participation significantly by serving the meals in a central location, and advertising availability to all clubs, sports teams, tutoring programs, or bands, and even inviting siblings from other schools to participate.[46] Another model, Supper in the Classroom, seeks to optimize participation through the classroom by offering supper in schools where instructional time exceeded existing time requirements. With just an additional 15 to 20 minutes of time in class, schools delivered meals to classrooms, at an average of 80% participation, and reported that federal reimbursements sufficiently covered labor and food costs.[47]

Summary: A Vision to Reduce Child Hunger through Schools

Goal	Policy Solution	Impact
Increase breakfast participation	Incentivize universal free meals in high-poverty schools with CEP	- As many as 82,221 students served free breakfast and lunch through CEP - Keeps students focused and ready for the school day - Reduced administrative burden and cost - Achieve greater breakfast-lunch cost balance - Additional $20,998,952 in federal funds in local economies
	Encourage innovative breakfast delivery models	
Increase summer and afterschool meal participation	Increase use of state Summer Food Service Program grants	- 35,883 more students served - Mitigates increased risk of hunger during the summer months - Targeted impact in higher-poverty areas - Additional $2,832,069 in federal funds in local economies
	Strengthen afterschool meal and snack programs	- 8,042,960 meals and snacks served afterschool and during the weekends or school holidays - Increase access to safe places for at-risk students to go to afterschool - Targeted impact in higher-poverty areas - Strengthen existing afterschool programming - Additional $7,675,948 in federal funds in local economies

Hunger in childhood is detrimental to healthy development and school performance, and the recent increase in Nebraska children experiencing food insecurity is a concern to all school and communities. Fortunately, a number of options are available to fight hunger in schools through child nutrition programs. For 70 years, the National School Lunch Program has demonstrated great success in keeping kids, especially those from low-income families, ready to learn at school. Today, programs that ensure that students are ready to learn at the start of the day, and others that support access to nutrition outside of the school day offer winning solutions, but are highly underutilized. As a state, we can support individual schools and districts in employing the right strategy to reduce hunger among their students.

45. U.S. Department of Agriculture, "At-Risk Afterschool Meals: A Child and Adult Care Food Program Handbook," July 2015, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/atriskhandbook.pdf, 8.
46. Center for Best Practices, "CACFP Afterschool Meals Program Expansion with the Umbrella Model," No Kid Hungry, https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/afterschool_meals_brief_umbrella_model_0.pdf, 2-3.
47. Center for Best Practices, "Increasing CACFP Afterschool Meals with Supper in the Classroom," No Kid Hungry, https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/download/file/fid/1396, 3.