



Executive Summary

School Breakfast:

Reducing Child Hunger, Bolstering Student Success

School Breakfast Program Participation
in New York State Public Schools

2015-2016 School Year



Fewer than one in three free or reduced-price-eligible students participated in school breakfast during the 2015-16 school year.



In the 2015-16 school year alone, more than \$71 million in federal funding was forfeited in NYS.



Overview

Hunger remains an unacceptable reality for one in four New York State (NYS) households with children.

The majority of students attending NYS public schools live in households with incomes near poverty level, with 62% of students qualifying for free and reduced-priced school meals. Children who experience hunger lack a fundamental building block to health and academic success.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) provides a vital nutritional support to children who arrive at school hungry. School breakfast fights hunger, improves nutrition, and empowers children to learn. It is a readily available, federally-funded resource to address child hunger, yet it has been consistently underutilized in NYS.

Report Findings

The key findings of this report demonstrate that the SBP is failing to reach our most vulnerable children with school breakfast. Fewer than one in three students qualified to eat for free or at a reduced price participated in breakfast during the 2015-2016 school year.

Failure to reach the national benchmark for breakfast participation—reaching 70% of F/RP lunch participants with breakfast—resulted in millions of dollars in federal reimbursements left on the table. In the 2015-2016 school year alone, more than \$71 million in federal funding was forfeited in NYS because only 46% of the F/RP-eligible students who participated in lunch also ate breakfast.

While participation in the SBP grew in comparison to the previous school year, this growth was concentrated in schools that offered universal breakfast through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)—a federal option that allows high-poverty schools to offer free school meals to all students. Notable growth also occurred in schools that offered universal breakfast in conjunction with serving meals through alternative service models like breakfast in the classroom and grab and go. The combination of those strategies is recognized as the most effective way to increase school breakfast participation.

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Recommendations:

- **Protect and preserve the SBP and CEP**
- **Address state-level barriers to CEP implementation**
- **Implement alternative service models and universal breakfast**

Recommendations

NYS must make increasing SBP participation a priority. That can be accomplished in a variety of ways: through the efforts of school leaders, through the implementation of federal- and state-level policy and legislative solutions, and by incentivizing the best practices discussed in this report. The report recommends the following:

- Protect and preserve the SBP and CEP at the federal level.
- Address state-level barriers to implementation of CEP and alternative breakfast service models.
- Implement alternative service models and universal breakfast, especially in schools with high percentages of free and reduced-price-eligible students.

How Hunger Solutions New York helps increase breakfast access

Hunger Solutions New York works to ensure every public school student has access to school breakfast. Our organization provides school districts with tools, resources and one-on-one support to help maximize the SBP's reach and to help ensure every student starts the school day free from hunger, properly nourished and prepared for a day of learning.

Learn more, and read the full school breakfast report, at SchoolMealsHubNY.org.



FoodHelpNY.org
SummerMealsNY.org
ChildcareMealsNY.org
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Hunger Solutions New York is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to alleviating hunger. We promote awareness of hunger in communities across the state, awareness about programs that address hunger, full participation in hunger assistance programs for all who are eligible, public policies that contribute to ending hunger, and public awareness of the economic benefit of anti-hunger programs. For more information, visit HungerSolutionsNY.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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