



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

April 10, 2015

Dear Superintendents and School Administrators:

As a well-trained educator, you are aware that ensuring that the basic needs of students are met is fundamental to a successful education. Students can be mentally, physically, and emotionally distracted from the learning process if they are concerned about securing life's essentials. One out of every five children lives in a household that struggles to put food on the table. Schools can lessen the burden on these students by ensuring that they have adequate access to breakfast and lunch during the school day.

I am writing to inform you of a tremendous opportunity that will allow schools in low income areas to feed all students free breakfast and lunch every school day while reducing the paper burden associated with determining which students are eligible for free meals.

This alternative is called the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP. It was added into law in 2010 and became available in Pennsylvania this school year. Six hundred and fifty-six schools across the Commonwealth took advantage of the opportunity. However, hundreds more schools are eligible to participate.

A Local Education Agency (LEA), school, or group of schools within the LEA that directly certify 40% or more of its students are eligible can participate. Qualifying schools that participate in CEP agree to serve all students free breakfasts and lunches for four consecutive school years. You are receiving this letter because our data shows that one or more of your schools directly certifies 50% or more students. Schools between 40-50% may qualify but may not find CEP as a viable option.

There are many other benefits associated with the CEP, such as reducing administrative burdens and costs associated with labor and paperwork, increasing school meals participation by as much as 25% in most schools, removing the stigma associated with students that qualify for free or reduced price meals, facilitating creative meal service options, and eliminating student debt related to food service.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Division of Food and Nutrition (DFN), has oversight for the School Nutrition Programs, including CEP. They have a variety of resources available at www.education.state.pa.us/cep to provide more information about this program.

Interested schools are encouraged to contact Eliza Laude, Special Projects Manager, Division of Food and Nutrition, at 1-800-331-0129, or by e-mail at ra-nslp@pa.gov in order to determine eligibility for the 2015-16 School Year.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pedro Rivera".

Pedro A. Rivera
Acting Secretary of Education

cc: School Nutrition Programs Contact Person