

BUDGET & TAX CENTER FACT SHEET

May 7, 2014

Ensuring that more students participate in breakfast and lunch programs is one way to help promote a quality education for all North Carolina students. For the 2014-15 school year, nearly 300,000 students in high-poverty schools across North Carolina could potentially benefit from an initiative referred to as the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), which ensures that every child in high-poverty schools receives two nutritious meals each day so that they are ready to learn all day.

Eligible schools must decide whether to adopt community eligibility by June 30, 2014 for the 2014-15 school year. Community eligibility can be adopted by an entire school district, particular schools, or a cluster of schools within a school district.

Here are some reasons why eligible schools in North Carolina should adopt community eligibility.

Community eligibility helps reduce child hunger by boosting participation in school meal programs

- Ensures nutritious meals for all students: Community eligibility allows schools to provide daily breakfast and lunch to every student in participating schools at no cost to students and families.
- Increases participation in school meal programs: In schools in Illinois, Kentucky, and Michigan that adopted CEP for two years, daily lunch participation rose 13 percent. Daily breakfast participation in these schools rose 25 percent.
- Promotes academic success: Higher participation in school meals means children can concentrate on their lessons and not on their empty bellies.

Community eligibility frees up funding for other education investments

- Reduces administrative costs: Eligible schools are not required to collect and maintain applications for school meals; this helps reduce administrative costs.
- More efficient meal programs: Not having to collect meal fees means schools can operate more efficient school meal programs and resources are freed up to invest in improving meal quality and increase staff time available for other educational priorities.

Existing federal funding is not reduced by adopting community eligibility

- Title I funds: School districts deciding to adopt community eligibility do not affect the amount of Title I funding the school districts receive.

A listing of all North Carolina school districts and individual schools that are eligible for community eligibility for the 2014-15 school year can be found via the NC Department of Public Instruction.

Visit: <http://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/news-events/community-eligibility-provision/>