



NOPREN

Nutrition & Obesity

POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

The Impact of COVID-19 on School Nutrition Programs: A Review of the Evidence

State-of-the-Science Monthly Webinar

April 2021

Healthy Eating Research (HER)

A national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Duke University



NOPREN Food Insecurity & School Wellness Working Groups

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO)

COVID-19 School Nutrition Implications Working Group

589 researchers, advocacy organization representatives and practitioners, including 200+ students

Selected Collaborators

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- American Heart Association – Voices for Healthy Kids
- American Public Health Services Association
- American Society for Nutrition
- Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators
- Center for Ecoliteracy
- Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Federal Nutrition Research Coalition
- Feeding America
- Food Research & Action Center
- Healthy Schools Campaign
- Hunger Free America
- Lunch Assist
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Farm to School Network
- National WIC Association
- School Nutrition Association (SNA)
- Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign
- Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
- Trust for America's Health
- Urban School Food Alliance
- Other NOPREN Working Groups & PAPREN (CDC-sponsored Physical Activity Policy Research and Evaluation Network)

Sub-Groups

Shared Data Collection Methods

- Survey
- Qualitative
- Implementation processes

Special Impact Topics

- Accelerated weight gain
- Innovations in meal service
- Pandemic/summer EBT
- Meals during instructional breaks
- Financial/operational health
- Early childhood
- Summer meal programs
- School/early childhood reopening
- State responses assessment

Case Studies

- Large urban district responses

Products *(as of April 2021)*

- Website
- Supported fellowship and co-chairs
- Student internship matchmaking tool
- Student summer seminar series and virtual poster session
- Resource manager, listserv, weekly resource digest
- 2 data collection repositories
- 36 peer-reviewed research articles - accepted, under review or development
- 2 HER research briefs (+ 2 under development)
- 4 fact sheets
- 7 Op-Eds
- 4 News article features
- 23 presentations and webinars

Lane H, Turner L, Dunn CG, Hager ER, Fleischhacker S. Leveraging implementation science in the public health response to COVID-19: Child food insecurity and federal nutrition assistance programs. *Public Health Reports*. 2020;135(6):728-736.

<https://nopren.ucsf.edu/covid-19-response>



University for the Common Good

International Actions on School Meals in Times of Crisis



USA

Scotland

March 10, 2021

11:00 am to 12:30 Pm EST



About the Webinar: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-actions-on-school-meals-in-times-of-crisis-tickets-140971121419>

Webinar Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vFQI2bR6lQ>

Interested in Planning Future Events: Please email sheilafly9@gmail.com

HER NOPREN Student Supports

- **HER NOPREN Weekly Digest**
 - Email Kirsten.Arm@duke.edu to join the list serv
 - Share resources to post and any feedback with Lindsey.Miller102@duke.edu
- **Student Internship Resources**
 - [Listing of Items Digest Follows \(Including Internship Listing\)](#)
- **2021 Summer Student Series, Summer Internships & Student Showcases**
 - In the works through HER NOPREN

Today's Presentation Line Up

- 1) Strengthening the Impact of USDA's Summer Meals Program During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - Jessica Soldavini, PhD, MPH, RD, LDN & Becky Franckle, ScD, MPH

- 2) "It Opened Everyone's Eyes:" Perspectives of Child Nutrition Professionals on Implementing School Nutrition Programs during COVID-19
 - Hannah Lane, PhD

- 3) Universal Free School Meals: An International Review
 - Juliana Cohen, PhD & Gabby Mcloughlin, PhD

- 4) Share Our Strength's Work on Feeding Kids During the Pandemic
 - Margaret Read

Improving Access to Free School Meals


Title of the HER Research Brief: Improving Access to Free School Meals: Addressing Intersections Between Universal Free School Meal Approaches and Educational Funding

Purpose: Given the unprecedented number of schools not collecting school meal applications this year, combined with Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) kicking off, where CEP expansion and universal school meals will likely be considered, this research brief aims to:

- 1) Provide an overview of current options for universal free meal provisions;
- 2) Summarize the intersections between universal free school meal approaches and educational funding; and
- 3) Identify recommendations for policy and practice to address the intersections between school meal food service and educational funding in order to improve access to universal free school meals.

Team: Amelie Hecht; Caroline Dunn; Lindsey Turner; Sheila Fleischhacker; Erica Kenney; Sara Bleich

Presentation: May 11th NOPREN School Wellness Working Group Brief Overview



Strengthening the Impact of USDA's Summer Meals Program During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Presenters: Jessica Soldavini & Rebecca Franckle

Soldavini J, Franckle RL, Dunn C, Turner L, Fleischhacker S. Strengthening the Impact of USDA's Summer Meals Program During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; Forthcoming May 2021. Will be available at: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>.

Summer Meals Program (SMP)



Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- A federally-funded, state-administrated program
- Reimburses program operators who serve free meals and snacks to children & adolescents in income-eligible areas during the summer
- Commonly located at schools, community centers, parks, faith-based organizations, summer camps, etc.
- Children 18 years or younger can receive 1-2 reimbursable meals each day

Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

- Available for schools that participate in the USDA National School Lunch (NSLP) and Breakfast (SBP) Programs,
- Allows streamlined continuation of the same meal service rules and claims procedures used during the regular school year, including nutrition standards



“Congregate feeding” requirement: Children must consume SMP meals and snacks on-site

Summer is Time of Unique Need & Risk

During the summer:

- Food insecurity increases
- Weight gain accelerates
 - Certain racial/ethnic populations
 - Children with overweight or obesity
- Obesogenic behaviors are less regulated vs. structured days



Summer Meals Program (SMP) is Underutilized

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2019):

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP):** 22 million children received free or reduced-priced meals
- **Summer Meals Program (SMP):** fewer than 2.7 million children participated

Only 13.8 children participated in SMP for every 100 children receiving free and reduced-price lunch during the school year

HOW TO
PARTICIPATE IN
SUMMER MEALS



<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/slsummar-1.pdf>

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/summer-food-service-program/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20the%20Summer%20Food,program's%20peak%20month%20of%20July>

SMP Participation Barriers

- Variety of known barriers to participation
 - Transportation
 - Access in rural areas
 - Location of meal sites

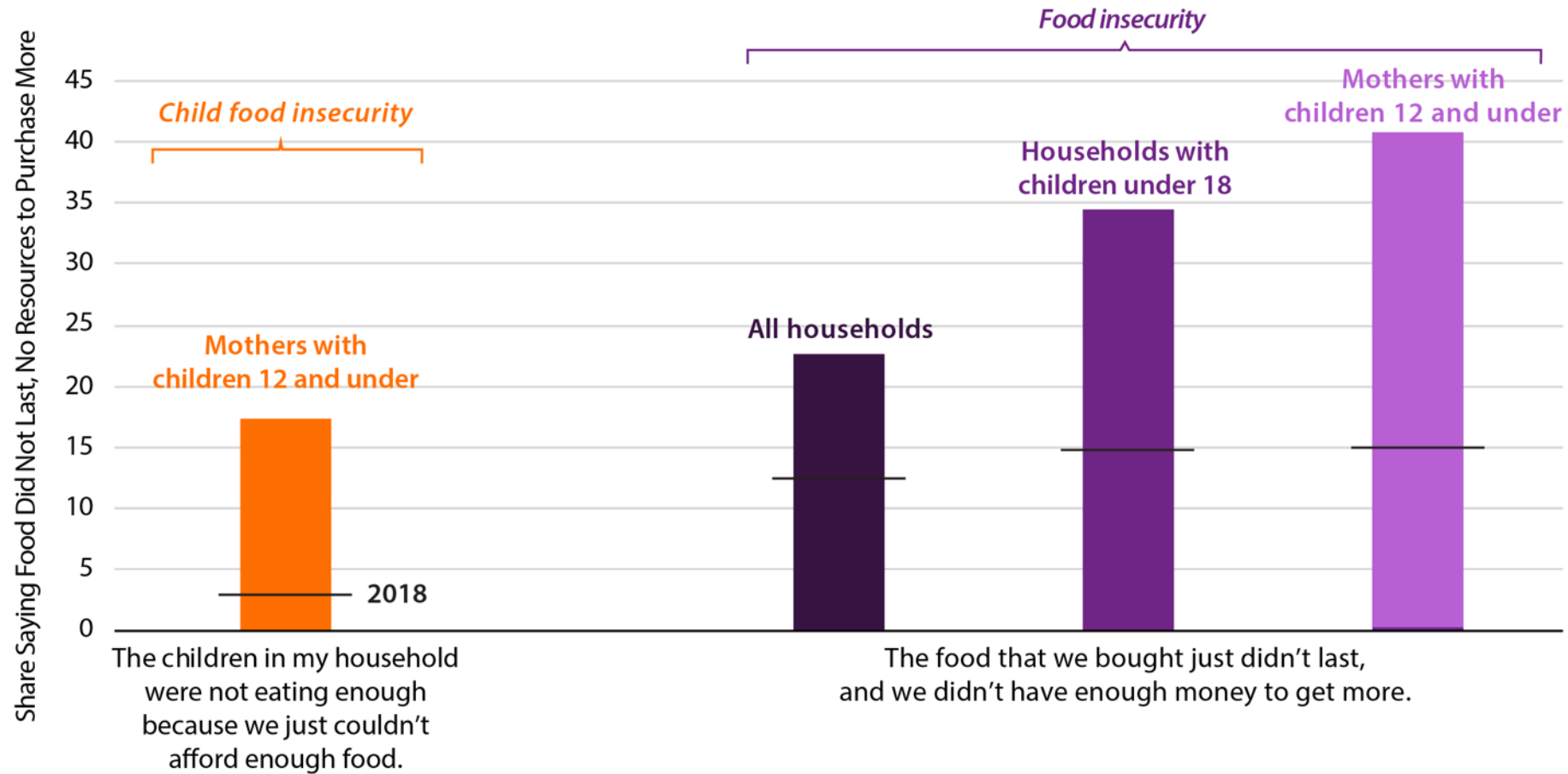


Summer Meals Program (SMP) is Understudied

- Child diet quality appears to be lower during the summer
- Few studies on the direct effects of the SMP
- Recent review article:
 - 8 peer-reviewed articles,
 - 10 other research documents related to SFSP



Food Insecurity in the United States, April 2020



Research Brief Aims

- (1) Explain the meal pattern requirements and select operational differences between SMP and the federal meal programs typically utilized during a traditional school year (i.e., NSLP/SBP/CACFP);
- (2) Summarize evidence on the effectiveness of the SMP, with a focus on food insecurity and nutrition quality;
- (3) Discuss key challenges, program adaptations, needs and opportunities resulting from COVID-19; and
- (4) Identify critical knowledge gaps and opportunities with the greatest likelihood to shape future SMP policy and practice

SFSP Nutrition Standards



- Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
 - Updated NSLP/SSO and CACFP meal pattern guidelines to reflect 2015-2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Meal pattern requirements for SFSP not as strong
 - Not aligned with 2015-2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* or the latest edition 2020-2025
- SFSP meal patterns could be updated to mirror select elements of NSLP and/or CACFP

Summer Meals Program (SMP): Summary of the Evidence

Alleviation of food insecurity

A few studies suggest availability and accessibility of SMP sites is associated with food security status.

Improvements in nutrient intakes and diet-related outcomes

Limited research. A couple short-term pilot studies reported promising results related to increases in nutrition knowledge, choices and behaviors.

Improvements in child weight or other health outcomes

Limited research.

Improvements in academic, behavioral or cognitive outcomes

No known studies.

COVID-19 Adaptations

- In March 2020, most NSLP/SBP meal sites across the country rapidly transitioned to SMP meal sites, which allowed for meal service flexibilities and higher reimbursements to help with the increased costs of serving meals during the COVID-pandemic.
- Current waivers include:
 - Allowing parents and guardians to pick up meals to bring home to their kids
 - Allowing sites to provide multiple-days' worth of meals at once
 - Allowing meals be served in non-congregate settings
 - Allowing meal pattern waivers when the supply chain is not accessible
 - Allowing states to serve free meals to children through SMP in all areas
- Waivers currently extended through September 30, 2021

SMP Meal Service Innovations

- Grab-and-Go Meals
- Meal Delivery
- Serving Multiple Meals at Once
- Serving Bulk Foods



SMP Research, Policy and Practice Implications

Research Needs and Opportunities During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Examine SFSP nutritional quality
- Assess SFSP participants' diet quality & weight outcomes
- Examine the need and impact of providing more than 2 meals and/or snacks per day
- Evaluate COVID-19 flexibilities with greatest potential to increase SFSP participation

Policy & Practice Needs and Opportunities During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Developing and disseminating best practices, case studies, technical assistance and support materials aimed at improving the nutritional quality and reach of SFSP, as well as increasing SFSP participation in high-risk, underserved areas;
- Conducting demonstration projects and pilots of innovative collaborative approaches across key sectors and settings to bolster SFSP participation and nutritional quality; and
- Convene an expert National Academics of Science, Engineering and Medicine panel to review and update the nutrition standards and meal requirements for SFSP

Questions?

jessica6@live.unc.edu

Franckle@bc.edu





NOPREN

Nutrition & Obesity

POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

“It opened everyone’s eyes”

Broad perspectives of child nutrition professionals on implementing school nutrition programs during COVID-19

Hannah Lane, PhD, MPH

Duke University School of Medicine

NOPREN State of the Science Webinar, April 6, 2021

Qualitative and Implementation Data Subgroup

- Goal: streamline and ensure policy relevance of qualitative investigation of school meal program implementation during COVID-19
- Developed a [repository](#) of open-ended questions for food service directors or other stakeholders
 - Collaborated with organizational partners (School Nutrition Association, Lunch Assist) to create concept definitions and sample questions
 - Mapped concepts of interest to existing frameworks and FNS nutrition standards
- Repository use
 - Data collection instrument in ~5 state-specific studies, 2 national studies/projects, 1 social media project during 2020 – *several papers published or under review*
 - Adapted based on state policies, state and local stakeholder interest, organizational priorities, time period of data collection

Question Bank for Organizational Stakeholders in COVID-19 Nutrition Response

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was seconds ago

90% \$ % .0 .00 123 Arial 11 B I A

ID	Concept	Definition	Overlapping Concepts	Subcategories	Example Questions	Relevance to Policy/Practice	USDA/FNS Professional Standards	
1	C1	USDA Waivers & Flexibilities	Process of understanding waiver policy language, the impact of waiver flexibilities on child nutrition programs, and other instructions from federal and state authorities	Meal Procurement & Preparation Meal Distribution Staffing Financial Impact Future Needs Summer Meal Provision	What do you know about the USDA waivers, and how did you find out? How did you determine the operational changes that would take place as a result of the waiver flexibilities? What was the decision-making progress like for what to do once you learned about the waivers? Who had a role in that decision? How did you communicate waiver flexibilities with your program or agency staff? What questions arose from the waivers? What unanswered questions do you still have regarding the USDA waivers? How much of what has been different about your food service during COVID-19 is related to the USDA waivers? Any additional thoughts on the process of using these waivers?	May inform efforts to improve communication and technical support between federal/state and local agencies.	3430, 4150, 3510, 3240	
2	C2	Site Selection, Adoption, and Closing	Process and description of opening and closing sites, including characteristics of selected sites	USDA Waivers & Flexibilities Student Participation & Reach Staffing Meal Distribution Community Partners/Engagement	Thinking back to when schools first closed, tell me about the decision-making process for selecting distribution methods and sites. What factors did you consider? (Probes: staff, experience with summer, safety, "readiness" or preparedness, equity, ability to use school buses to transport meals, school district leadership involvement) In your program, what were the qualities of sites that were "ready" compared to those that were not? Tell me about how your program operated before all this happening. Which programs were you operating before, and which ones have you been operating during the pandemic?	May inform efforts or potential policies that can lead to an increase in the number and types of sites serving meals.	3510, 4150	
3	C3	Student Participation & Reach	Process and description of student participation and reach, including characteristics of participating students	Site Selection & Adoption Meal Distribution Pandemic EBT Augmenting Programs	Comparison to typical operation Reasons for participation or non-participation Barriers Communication	What can you tell me about the families that are participating in your program now, compared to who was before? How about families that are not participating? What are some reasons why (Probes: distance, fear, lack of awareness, other options)? How have you communicated with families about participating?	Inform potential new strategies, programs, and/or policies for reaching children not currently being reached.	4120, 4130, 4150
4	C4	Staffing	How sponsors staff their sites, including use of volunteers, and how decisions were made	Meal Preparation Meal Distribution Financial Impact Future Needs Summer Meal Provision	Safety/COVID-19+ protocols Communication Volunteers	What was the decision-making process for staffing the sites? What mattered most (e.g., part time/full time, underlying conditions)? What staffing challenges did you face when you initially got started (e.g., PPE supplies, hours)? Have new challenges emerged? What does your staffing/volunteer situation like right now, compared to how it was before? Who is staffing your sites right now (child nutrition staff, volunteers, principals etc)	Identify new technical support and professional development needs and opportunities for staff	3410, 3420, 3440, 3330, 3360, 3210, 3220, 3240
5	C5	Communication	Channels and processes of communication across stakeholder levels throughout the pandemic response	Meal Distribution Community Engagement P-EBT Augmenting Programs Staffing	What lines of communication were used between FSDs and Site Supervisors? Were they successful? What lines of communication were used in your district to keep parents updated on site openings/closures and new distribution methods? Were they successful? Did those channels change over time?		4110, 4120, 4150, 3240	
6	C6	Meal Procurement and Preparation	Methods and processes used to prepare meals, challenging factors, including comparisons to pre-COVID practices	Meal Distribution Financial Impact Staffing USDA Waivers Site Selection Student Participation	Food quality/nutritional value Food sources	What is different with your program than what you would usually do, in terms of food quality? (probes: nutrient value) What is different with your program than what you would usually do, in terms of preparation? (probes: order from distributor, local products, cost of food/supplies) What methods have your sites used to prepare meals? Who is involved in this process? What are some challenges you have had in terms of preparation (e.g., procurement delays, meeting nutrition guidelines, switch to grab and go, volume)? What are some innovative or creative preparation methods your sites have up with, or that you heard of others using?		1170, 1130, 2210, 2620, 2630, 3210, 3220, 3240
7					What does your distribution process look like (e.g., delivery methods, types of meals, days per week meals, number of meals at once)			

Question Bank Use and Descripti Concept Definitions Framework Alignment Unstructured Guide Example Studies Summary Explore

Please use and share the [Google doc](#) (and document usage)!

Study 1: North Carolina

- Collaborative project between 4 universities and an applied food systems research firm
 - Endorsement by N.C Department of Public Instruction and the Carolina Hunger Initiative
- Objective: Understand reach and implementation of school nutrition programs across North Carolina during COVID-19
- Methods: Semi-structured interviews with child nutrition directors (n=23) guided by repository; GIS mapping of meal sites
- Funders:
 - NIH National Heart, Blood, Lung Institute K12 Career Development Award (PI: Lane)
 - UNC North Carolina Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute COVID-19 Pilot Grant (PI: Ammerman)

Preliminary Themes

- Inner Program: Staff are “unsung heroes”
- Local Context: “It opened everyone’s eyes”
- State Context: Leadership was a “steadying force”
- National Context: Program should be “straight across the board universal”

“We have asked for years and years for this program to be funded, to feed all kids. **If it’s ever going to happen, it needs to happen now”**

Study 2: Maryland

- Collaboration between Maryland State Department of Education and University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Objective: Assess RE-AIM (reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, maintenance) of school meal service during COVID-19
- Methods: Mixed methods analysis of: claims data; survey (n=102) and semi-structured interviews (n=19) with directors and state leaders guided by repository; GIS mapping of meal sites; coding of public facing communication
- Funder:
 - MSDE Office of School and Community Nutrition

Preliminary Themes

- Reach/Adoption: Waivers were essential, but complicated
- Implementation Concerns: Financial losses and staff safety
- Implementation Triumphs: Staff flexibility and use/growth of partnerships
- Maintenance: Consider universal free meals

“We spend a lot of money to make sure these meal eligibilities are correct. We've gotten so far away from what we're really supposed to be doing, feeding children, making sure that the meal is a great and healthy meal...let's feed everybody and not worry about who needs it and who doesn't because they all really need it in the end.”

Dissemination

Maryland


EVALUATION OF COVID-19 SCHOOL MEALS RESPONSE: SPRING 2020

School closures during COVID-19 have increased the risk for food insecurity among children across the United States, including in Maryland. To support access to meals for children during school closures, the emergency Summer Food Service Program (SFSFP) was initiated in lieu of traditional school meals programs, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Federal and State governments also issued several temporary waivers (described in the figure below) to enable flexibilities to existing policies to support the provision of these emergency meals.

The University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) worked with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland School Systems (Local Education Agencies or LEAs), and Food Service leadership at three levels (State, LEA, and meal site) to evaluate meal provision during COVID-19-related school closures, in the Spring of 2020 (March 16th –June 27th). This evaluation uses the RE-AIM framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) to investigate the following:

1. Examine the **reach** (number of free or reduced priced breakfast and lunch meals served before versus after spring 2020 COVID-19-related school closures) and **effectiveness** (number of total breakfast and lunch meals served before versus after school closures), and the role of federal waiver utilization and communication/meal distribution strategies associated with reach and effectiveness;
2. Describe **adoption** (via communication with families) and **implementation costs** of school meal service;
3. Understand public LEA and distribution site-level **implementation** processes for meal provision, including supportive factors and barriers; and,
4. Understand strategies for **maintenance** of meal service (following Spring 2020 school closures).


Throughout the report, we describe evaluation results and key NEXT STEPS for research, policy, and implementation.



FEDERAL & MARYLAND STATE COVID-19 RELIEF NUTRITION WAIVERS ISSUED BY MONTH

MARCH 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows meal service time flexibility (National Waiver #1) • Allows non-congregate meals (National Waiver #2) • Allows meal and snack provision when no enrichment activity is offered (National Waiver #3) • Provides meal pattern flexibility (National Waiver #4) • Allows parents/guardians to pick up meals (National Waiver #5) • Extends Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) deadlines (National Waiver #6) • Waives certain onsite monitoring requirements (National Waiver #7-11) <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;"> USDA Waiver Info: https://www.usda.gov/programs/food-nutrition-assistance/this-response-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers </p> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;"> MSDE OSCHP Waiver Info: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/ </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the deadline for reporting requirements (National Waiver #12) • Permits area eligibility for closed enrolled sites (National Waiver #14) • Waives Summer Food Service Program (SFSFP) first week visits (National Waiver #15) • Allows for offer versus serve in SFSFP (National Waiver #16) • Waives meal service time restrictions for SFSFP and SSO (National Waiver #17) • Extends the Internal assessment deadline (National Waiver #18) • Allows for renewal of procurement contracts (National Waiver #19) • Waives annual review requirements for CACFP (National Waiver #20) • Extends SFSFP and SSO pandemic operations (National Waiver #21) • Expands area eligibility (State Waiver #1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows parent pick-up for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) (State Waiver #2) • Extends non-congregate feeding, meal service time flexibility, meal pattern flexibility, and parent/guardian pick up of meals (National Waiver #22-25) <div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Twenty-five waivers and subsequent waiver extensions were released by the USDA and the State of Maryland during the first 15 weeks of the pandemic (between March 16th and June 27th), as shown in this timeline.</p> </div>

<http://www.marylandschoolwellness.org/tools/Data-Reports/>



[Our Work](#) [Find Meals for Kids](#) [News](#) [About](#)

Voices from the Front Line of School Nutrition in NC


UPDATE: USDA EXTENDS FREE MEALS FOR KIDS THROUGH REMAINDER OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Learn how to find meals for kids near you, or check your school or district's website, social media, and direct communications for the latest information on how where to find meals and how this might affect meal service for your children.

Thank you to USDA for making this decision that benefits all children and school nutrition staff in NC. And thank you to the school nutrition team at the NC Department of Public Instruction and the many other NC organizations that were early and fierce advocates for this extension.

“We don't ask a child in the United States what your mama and daddy makes to get on the school bus. Or to get a textbook. Or to hand them a device. Why in the world do we draw the line in the cafeteria?”

—School Nutrition Administrator in North Carolina



Below are excerpts from candid conversations that district-level School Nutrition Administrators in North Carolina had with university researchers about the challenges they face as schools reopen for the fall, and the experience of serving school meals during the COVID-19 emergency. More than 23 School Nutrition Administrators were interviewed, each from a different school district in North Carolina. We are sharing excerpts from this ongoing project that pertain to the urgent subject of school reopenings and decisions on how school meals are served.

March 16, 2020
Governor Roy Cooper announces that

Spring and Summer 2020
Schools and community partners

September 1, 2020
The USDA waives allowing free meals

<https://www.carolinahungerinitiative.org/Voices/>



Ongoing and future research

- Theoretically driven analyses and publications within studies
- Cross-study secondary analyses focused on repository concepts
 - Funding from Share Our Strength to identify and describe innovations and best practices across N.C and Maryland (2021)
 - R21 application under review includes six studies across the U.S. that used the repository
- Establishing novel research method to acquire qualitative data when data are need quickly and research questions have broad applicability



North Carolina Study Partners

- Hannah Lane, Duke SOM
- Jessica Soldavini, UNC Chapel Hill
- Alice Ammerman, UNC Chapel Hill
- Jared McGuirt, UNC Greensboro
- Beth Katz, Food Insight Group
- Stephanie Jilcott Pitts, East Carolina University

North Carolina Study Team

- Duke: Kiran Grover, Isabelle Sico, Abby Rader
- UNC Chapel Hill: Sam Rasnic, Luisa-Furstenberg-Beckman, Madison Troyer
Stephanie Martin, Heather Emmett
- Food Insight Group: Aaron Cohen
- Endorsement from DPI and Carolina Hunger Initiative

Maryland Study Partners

- Erin Hager, University of MD SOM
- Leslie Sessom-Parks, MSDE
- Chela Cooper, MSDE
- Linda Worrel, MSDE
- Yan Wang, George Washington University
- Hannah Lane, Duke SOM
- Jared McGuirt, UNC Greensboro
- Zafar Zafari, University of MD Baltimore

Maryland Study Team

- University of Maryland SOM: Perri Carroll,
Janny Dinh, Leah Gutermuth

Thank you!

Email: hannah.lane@duke.edu

Twitter: @hglane

Want to learn more about
NOPREN or join the network?
Visit <https://nopren.ucsf.edu>
or contact NOPREN@ucsf.edu



NOPREN
Nutrition & Obesity
POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

Universal Free School Meals- An International Review

Juliana Cohen, ScM, ScD

Associate Professor, Department of Health Sciences,
Merrimack College

Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Nutrition,
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Gabriella McLoughlin, PhD

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Implementation Science
Center for Cancer Control (WU-ISC3)

Prevention Research Center
Washington University in St. Louis

Background

- Policies that support universal free school meals are gaining attention as a strategy to:
 - Reduce stigma and diet-related disparities
 - Promote children's nutrition more broadly
 - Potentially lower administrative costs for schools
- Currently universal school meals are only available in a small number of countries
 - Finland
 - Sweden
 - Estonia
 - South Korea
 - England & Scotland (only for children in their first three years of primary school [children ages 4–7y])
 - Japan (universal but not free)
 - US (high-poverty schools)



Methods

- Conducted according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines
- Four online databases were used: PubMed, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Thomson Reuters' Web of Science, and Academic Search Ultimate (and references + a review of all articles citing the resultant literature)

- Eligible studies were quantitative research articles evaluating universal free school meals AND:

- School meal participation rates
- Academic performance
- Attendance
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Diet quality
- Food insecurity
- School finances

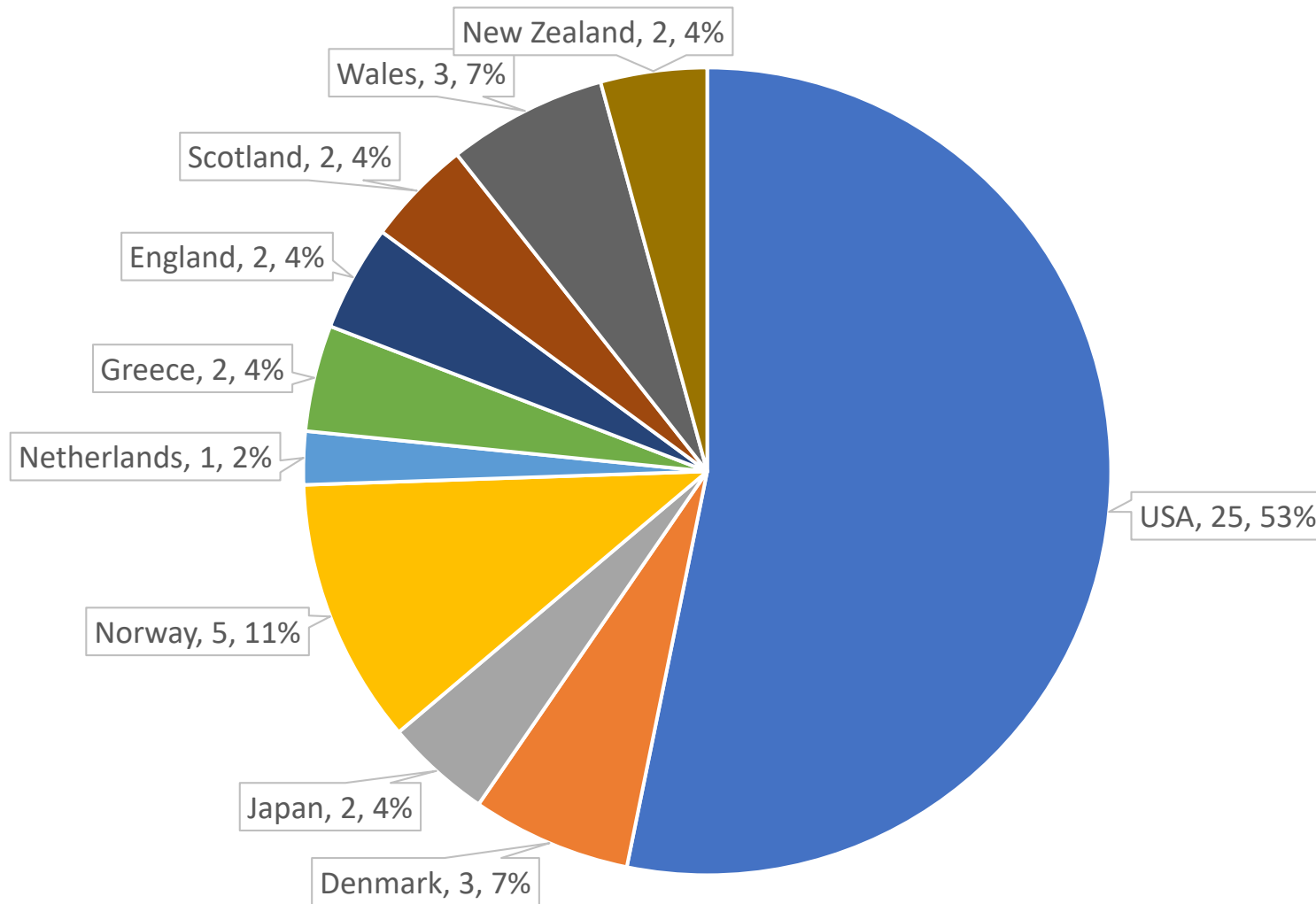


- Inclusion criteria were English, peer-reviewed publications or official government reports within countries with developed economies (i.e., members of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD]), and conducted in elementary – high schools during the academic year

- Assessment of study quality and biases were based on adapted Newcastle–Ottawa Scales (NOS)

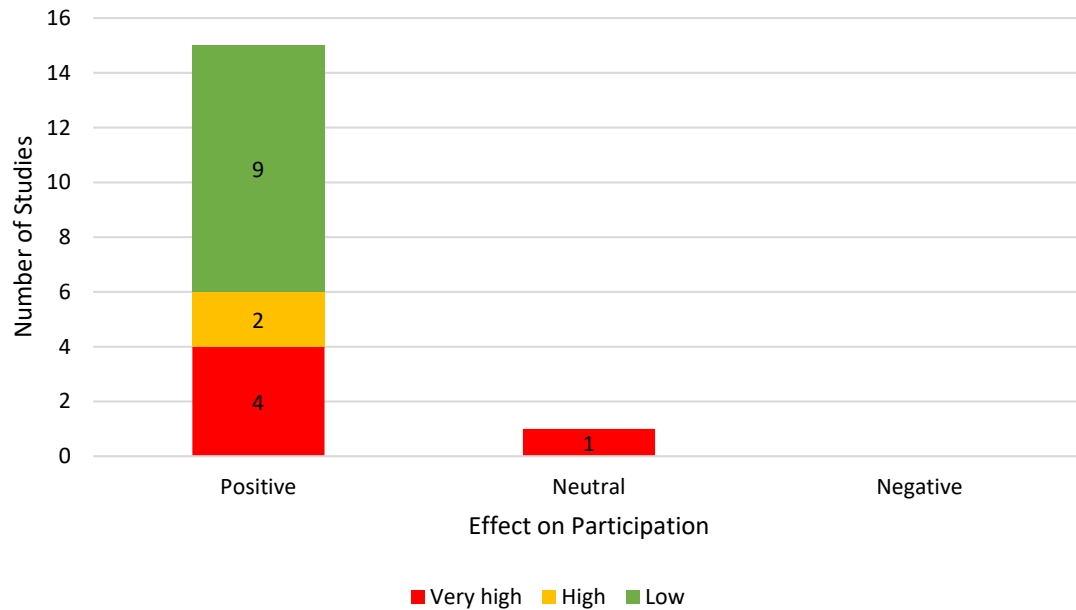
Results

Location of Studies

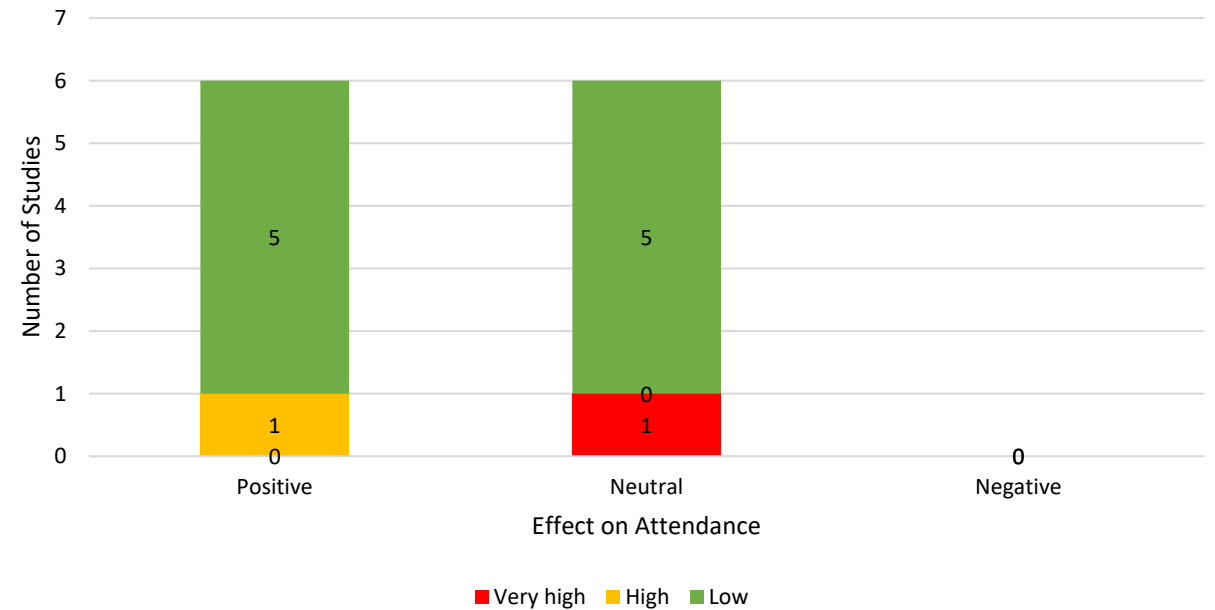


Influence on Participation and Attendance

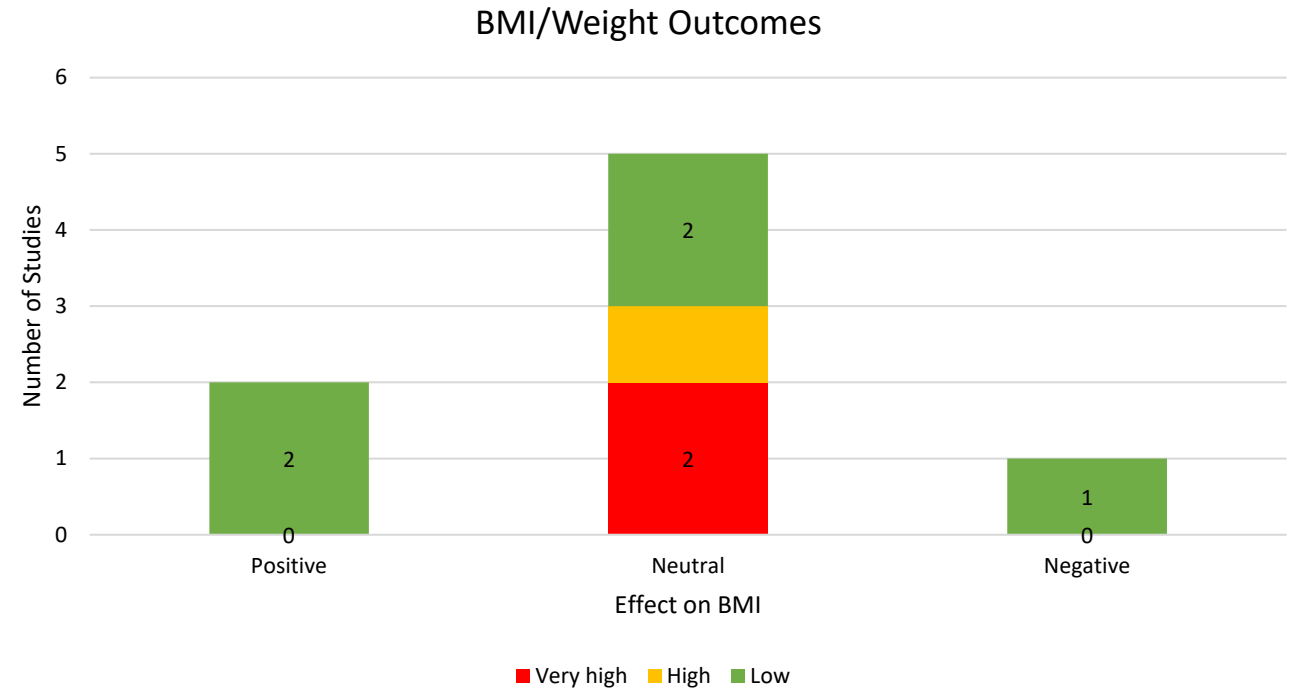
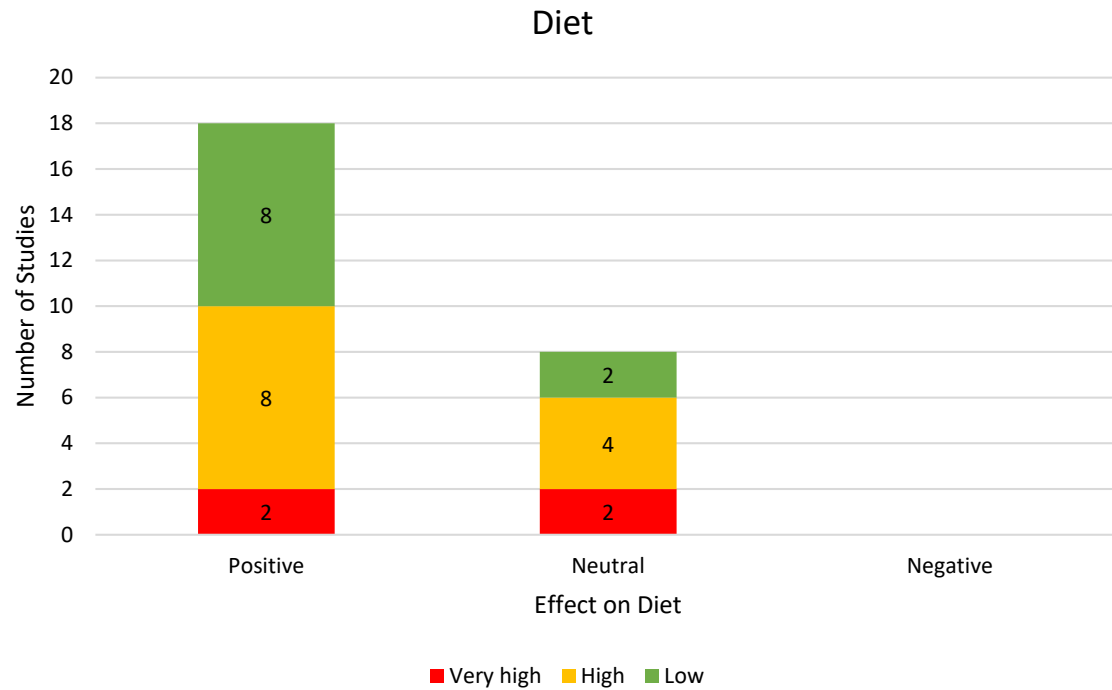
Participation



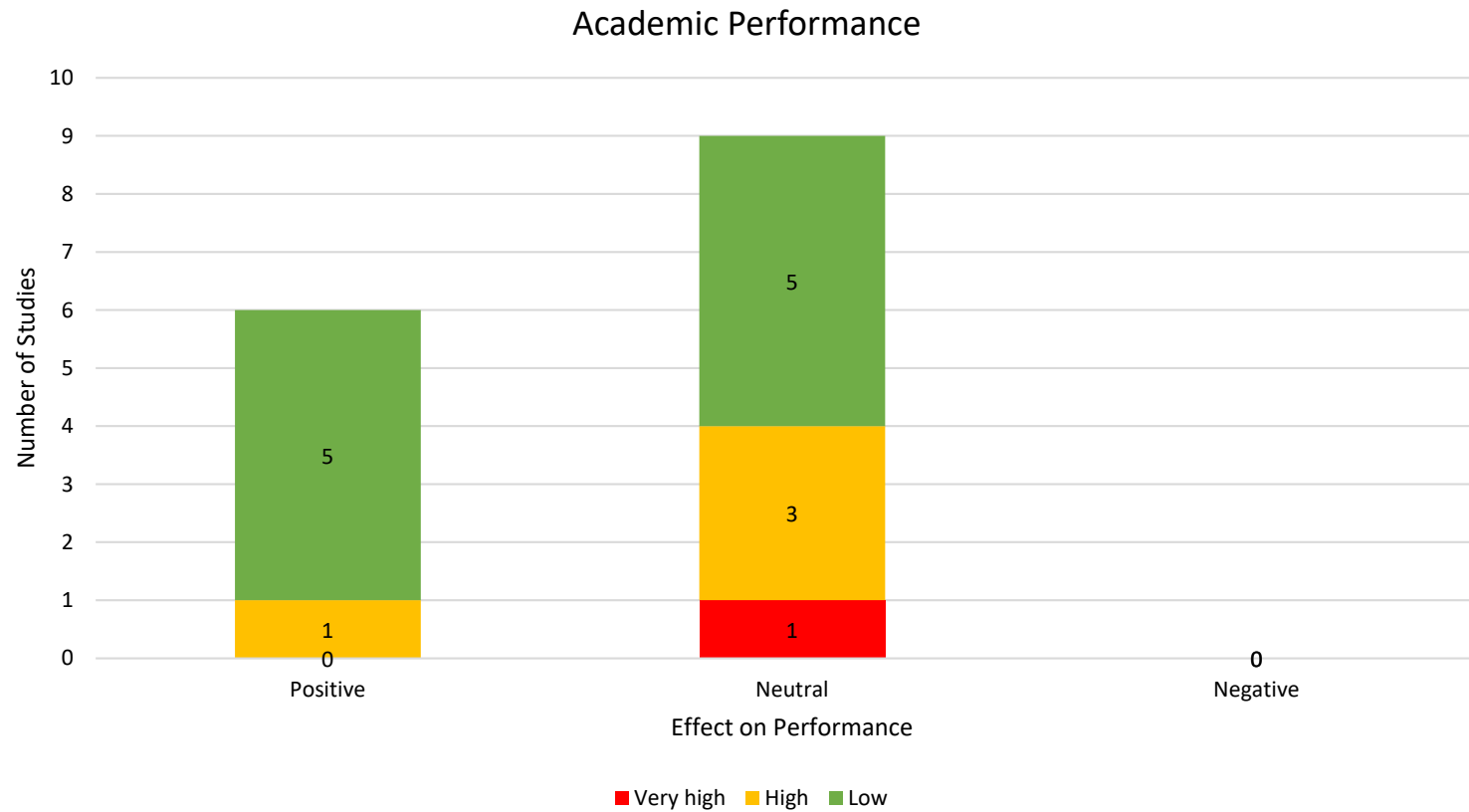
Attendance



Influence on Diet and BMI



Influence on Academic Performance



Discussion

- Universal free school meals appears to have multiple benefits for students, particularly those who are food-insecure and/or near eligible for free meals
- The majority of studies in the current review found that universal free school meals were associated with increases in participation and improved diet quality and food security, and conversely, were associated with either no change or improved BMI.
- Future research should further examine the financial impact of universal free school meals for both schools and families
- Overall, in the presence of strong nutrition guidelines, universal free school meals have multiple potential benefits for students and schools, and should be considered by countries not currently with this policy





Our COVID Response to Food Insecurity

Margaret Read

Senior Manager of Policy and Research

• April 12, 2021



No Kid Hungry is a Campaign By Share Our Strength

We're an organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Through proven, effective campaigns, we connect people who care to ideas that work.



OUR MISSION

TO END HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW



TARGET AUDIENCE

Everyone who wants to play a part in ending hunger and poverty

People who believe every kid should have the opportunity to fulfill their potential

Those who fund or offer food skills education

Nonprofits and foundations focused on poverty-related and social justice issues

WHAT WE DO

Share Our Strength connects people who care to ideas that work

No Kid Hungry ensures every child has healthy food every day

Cooking Matters empowers caregivers with essential food skills to improve the health of their babies and kids

Community Wealth Partners helps change agents tackle social justice and poverty related issues

OUR PROMISE

Everyone has a strength to share to help ensure every individual can live a healthy and productive life

You can ensure no kid will grow up hungry in America

Proven solutions that educate and inspire families to shop for, prepare and eat healthy food every day

A partner in reimagining what's possible in order to solve social problems — once and for all

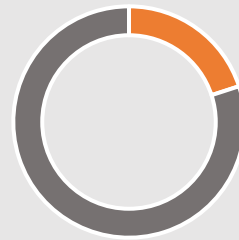
No Kid Hungry Guideposts

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaigns set the following long-term "guideposts" in key child nutrition programs:



Breakfast

70% of children who eat free or reduced-priced (F/R) lunch also receive school breakfast.



Afterschool

The total number of afterschool meals (CACFP suppers, CACFP snacks, and NSLP snacks) is \geq 20% of F/R lunch meals.



Summer

Daily summer meals and snacks served in all summer programs is \geq 30% of target daily F/R meals served during school year.



Whatever It Takes Report

- Over \$66 million to 1,800 schools, local nonprofits, and food banks across all 50 states, DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico
 - 40% suburban
 - 37% urban
 - 30% rural



Texting Hotline
Text FOOD to 877-877

Free Meals Finder
<https://www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals>



Resource Development



Summary of COVID-19 Child Nutrition Program Response Nationwide Waivers & Memos

This resource briefly describes all nationwide waivers and guidance memoranda released by the USDA in response to the coronavirus. Due to the number of extensions, this resource begins with waivers listed by expiration date; the waiver name links to description of the latest version. Next, the table lists waivers and memoranda in order of number and release date. The waiver or memo number in the table links to the USDA landing page for the waiver.

This was last updated on 4/8/2021.

See the [USDA FNS website](#) for all nationwide waivers and [guidance memoranda](#). See the end of this document for a glossary of acronyms and terms.

State agencies are eligible to use all nationwide waivers without application, but they must still elect to be subject to the waiver by notifying their USDA Regional Office. These waivers do not apply to all operators automatically – state agencies must opt in and provide information to operators before operators can implement the waiver. Please contact your state agency for more information about these and other state-requested waivers.

Summer Meals Waivers in Effect Until September 30, 2021

- [Non-congregate Feeding in the SFSP & SSO \(#2, #24, #44, #54, #61 & #75\)](#)
- [Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children \(#5, #25, #47, #55, #62 & #76\)](#)
- [Meal Service Time Flexibilities in the SFSP and SSO \(#17, #50, #68 & #78\)](#)
- [Meal Pattern Flexibility in the SFSP & SSO \(#4, #13, #24, #26, #38, #45, #53, #63 & #74; #74 for SSO only – SFSP waiver expires June 30, 2021\)](#)
- [Area Eligibility Waiver Extensions \(#32, #46, #52, #60 & #77\)](#)
- [Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in the SFSP and NSLP SSO \(#14, #48, #64 & #80\)](#)
- [Waiver of the First Week Site Visit Requirement in the SFSP \(#15, #49, #65 & #81\)](#)
- [Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the SFSP \(#18, #51, #67 & #79\)](#)
- [Allow Sponsors that Successfully Participated in the SFSP in FY 2019 to Operate as Experienced Sponsors in FY 2021 \(#83\)](#)

Monitoring Waivers in Effect Until September 30, 2021

- [Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for CACFP Sponsors \(#7 & #27 were broader; #39 only waives the onsite requirement\)](#)
- [Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for CACFP State Agencies \(#8, #28 & #40\)](#)
- [Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for SFSP Sponsors \(#10, #30 & #42\)](#)
- [Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for SFSP State Agencies \(#11, #31 & #43\)](#)

Summer Meals Waivers in Effect Until June 30, 2021

- [Allow SFSP and SSO Operations through School Year 2020-2021 \(#56 & #59\)](#)
- [Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the SFSP \(#57 & #69\)](#)
- [Food Service Management Contract Duration in the NSLP and SFSP \(#19 & #71\)](#)
- [Meal Pattern Flexibility in the SFSP & SSO \(#4, #13, #24, #26, #38, #45, #53, #63; extended through Sept. 30, 2021 for SSO only\)](#)

Latest version available at: <http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.com/resource/summary-current-covid-19-child-nutrition-program-response-nationwide-waivers>



Back-to-School Meal Service Toolkit

Feeding Students During the 2020-2021 School Year Amidst the Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic

Released:
July 23, 2020



Resource Development



STRATEGIES TO INCREASE MEAL PARTICIPATION

This resource features tried and true strategies to increase meals participation from FNS Directors across the nation, from hosting virtual meetings with families to playing jingles on your mobile meals route, like the ice cream truck, to signal meal pickup time!

Student Input & Meal Quality

"Get to know your customer - your students! Try collaborating with students and gathering input so there is mutual ownership of the school meal program. Together, you can build breakfast and lunch menus and increase meal participation."

Randy Milton, FNS Coordinator, Shephard ISD, rural TX

Key Strategies

- Focus on cultural preferences that reflect community favorites.
- Consider asking students which recipes they like, via social media or conversation at meal pick-up sites.
- Build a reputation for high-quality, tasty meals.
- Incorporate local products and produce, where possible, and feature the local producers in your menu.

Using Culinary Skills

All Missions in CED in TX, FNS Director Rosy Woodrum has a strong commitment to keeping meals exciting and delicious. She has incorporated a variety of cuisines onto her menu, such as Cuban sandwiches and Chinese food in the to-go boxes typically seen at Chinese takeout restaurants. Students and families appreciate the meals for their high quality and diversity.



For more resources on serving meals during the coronavirus pandemic, visit our website: <http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/coronavirus-response-recovery>

EQUIPMENT LIST FOR MEAL SERVICE SY20-21



As districts prepare for the 2020-2021 school year Food and Nutrition Services departments are considering meal service options and equipment needs given the unique circumstances brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

This resource captures new and existing equipment items that can be used to serve meals to students in classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria, or to go home throughout the existing pandemic environment. This document will continue to be updated as we become aware of useful items that schools are using to successfully implement meal delivery (Last updated 7/23/20).

REPURPOSING & RE-USING ITEMS

What schools may already have:

- Carts, coolers, salad bars, bun racks, shelves with casters, dollies, refrigerators, storage spaces, and catering equipment.

How can you repurpose these items? Below are some innovative ideas/solutions that school nutrition leaders nationwide have shared:

- **Breakfast carts:** you can use these to deliver meals (both breakfast and lunch) to the classroom. Also, you can add casters (cart wheels) to shelves, and use bun pan/bread racks as needed for food delivery. Kitchen carts can also be used to deliver meals. Feeling creative? Decorating kitchen carts with poster paper can improve presentation.
- **Containers:** utilize existing containers in storage.
 - The following items can be used to hold these items:
 - **Disposable cups:** pastas, rice dishes, potato bowls, fruits/vegetables and soup;
 - **Clamshells:** cold items, salads, sandwiches/wraps, protein packs;
 - **Paper wrap:** cold sandwiches/wraps, and designed or colorful paper for promotional days;
 - **Foil wrap:** hot sandwiches/wraps, burgers, hot dogs, tacos, burritos;
 - **Plastic wrap:** containers without lids, trays of food.
 - **Rolling ice caddies** can be used to roll meals out, or as mobile milk boxes.
 - **Salad bars** can be used as milk storage and delivery carts.
 - **Smaller refrigeration units** can be used to store items temporarily.
 - **Red milk dollies** can be used to transport items to the classroom.
 - **Ice cream freezers** can be used to keep milk cold.

Tips:

- Items can be made mobile by adding wheels/casters to them.
- Look at what you already have in your kitchens, storage and catering departments then determine how to use/re-purpose those items.
- Share ideas with other FNS directors and staff.
- Essential items will include: packaging and disposable items; carts and coolers.

Resource Development

- **American Rescue Plan (ARP)**
 - SNAP
 - WIC
 - P-EBT
 - CACFP
 - Child Care Supports
 - Expansion of the Child Care Tax Credit
 - ESSERF (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund)
 - Funding to States, Cities, Local and Tribal Governments and US Territories
 - FEMA Disaster Relief Fund

Summary of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

On February 27, 2021, the US House of Representatives passed the \$1.9 billion covid-19 relief legislation, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, [H.R. 1319](#), to address the ongoing economic hardship and food insecurity. This is the 6th relief package since the beginning of the pandemic. We hope that the Senate will take up this measure and pass it quickly in their chamber. Below is the summary of provisions that are critical to our policy and advocacy priorities.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Section 1011
 - Extends the 15% SNAP benefit enhancement through September 30, 2021. Currently, the benefit is authorized through June 30, 2021.
 - Provides \$1.15 billion for SNAP administrative expenses and available until Sept 30, 2023. Of this funding, \$15 million is dedicated to program management and oversight.
- Section 1012 Online SNAP purchasing pilot
 - An additional \$25 million is provided for online SNAP purchasing pilot modernization efforts and funding is available until Sept 30, 2026.
- Section 1001, Food Supply Chain and Agriculture Pandemic Response
 - \$4 billion is allocated for FY2021 and available until expended. Funding is intended for purchase food and agricultural commodities and distributes to individuals in need. Non-profit organizations and restaurants and other food-related entities that participate in the food process, storing, or receiving are eligible for this funding.
- Section 1014 Commodity Supplemental Program
 - For FY 21, \$37 million is provided and available through Sep 30, 2022.
- Section 1013 Nutrition assistance American Samoa, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands
 - An additional \$1 billion for nutrition assistance is provided and available through Sept 30, 2027.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) [Section 2301 & 2302]:

- Provides \$490 million to boost the Cash Value of Voucher (CVV) for fruits and vegetable to \$35 per month for women and children. The funding will remain available until Sept. 30, 2022.
- States need to inform USDA of their intent to increase CVV and no further application is needed for this purpose.
- States' and USDA's authority to increase the CVV will end by Sep 30, 2021.
- Provides \$390 million for WIC program modernization for the FY2021 and funding will remain available through Sept 30, 2024. Modernization efforts include outreach and innovation to increase participation and effectively implement waivers and flexibilities authorized by Congress.

Pandemic-EBT [Section 2304]

- Extends P-EBT to any school year in which there is a public health emergency due to a COVID-19.
- Deems all schools and child care facilities closed for the summer following a school year in which there is a public health emergency in order to extend P-EBT benefits for the summer.



Current Research Projects

- COVID School Meals (Spring & Summer 2020)
- Maryland, North Carolina, & New York
 - Erin Hager
 - Hannah Lane
 - Jessica Soldavini
 - Alice Ammerman
 - Jared McGuirt
 - Julia McCarthy



Measurement, Planning, and Analysis Team



Landscape Analysis

- Establish a quantitative understanding of a community's baseline program participation.
- Identify and recommend potential target areas/schools based on No Kid Hungry best practices.
- Set ambitious and achievable goals based on strategies and progress forecasts.



Hunger Data Analysis

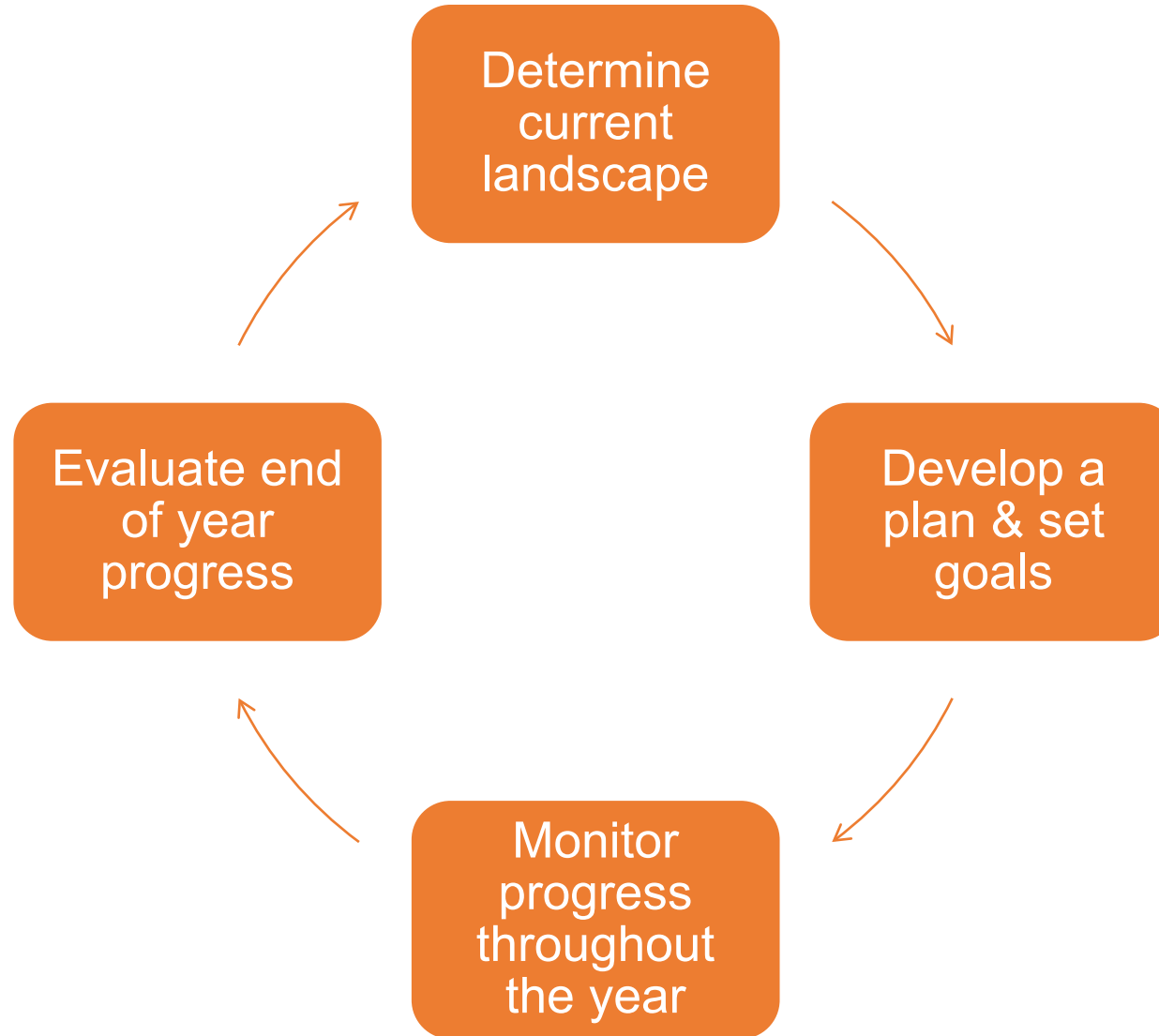
- Analyze national and local participation rates and trends.
- Provide Share Our Strength's "official" numbers for progress and impact reporting – used in funder proposals and reports, NKH Dinner guides, press releases, impact reports, talking points, etc.



Technology Projects

- Collect program participation data to build-out Share Our Strength's cloud-based data lake.
- Create online dashboards and maps to connect No Kid Hungry staff with easy-to-understand data and information.

Lifecycle of Measurement, Planning & Analysis



NKH Planning & Analysis – Determine Current Landscape

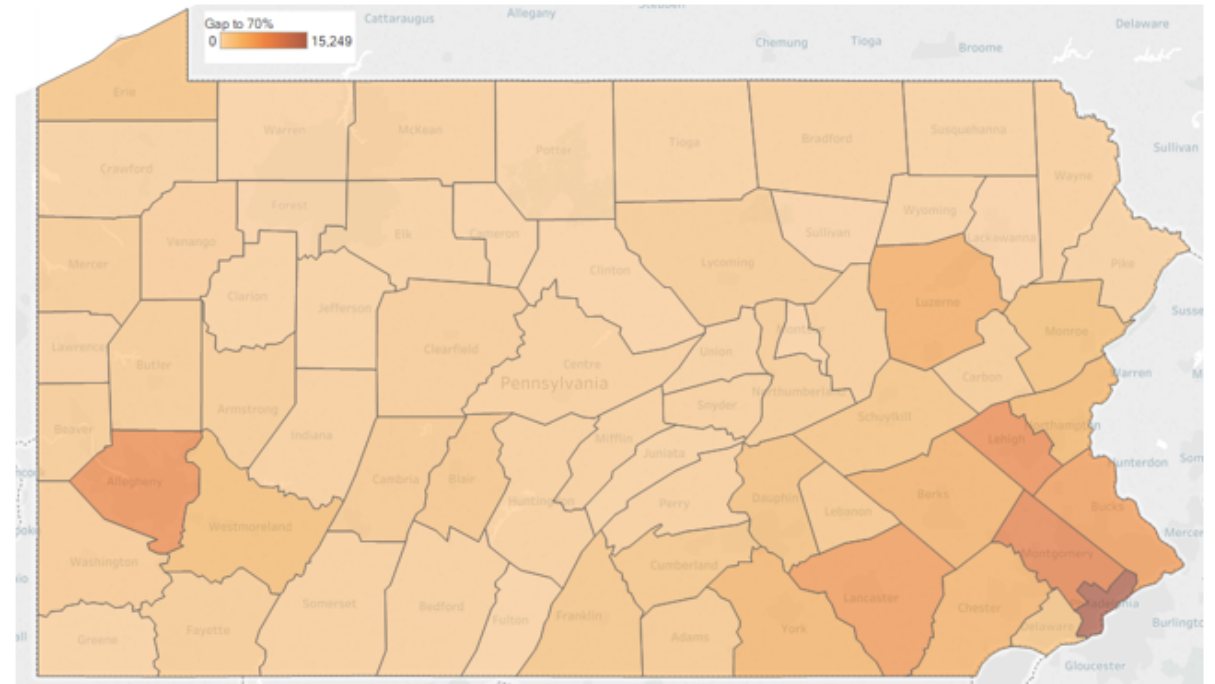
Excerpt from PA landscape analysis:

Opportunities to Increase Breakfast Participation

Breakfast Gap by County

The following table shows the 11 counties with the largest school breakfast participation gaps in the state. The final column, “Gap to 70% (# of kids)”, shows the number of F/R eligible kids that would be added to the School Breakfast Program if the county reaches the NKH guidepost of 70% participation. The map displays the same information for the entire state. The counties with the largest breakfast gaps appear the darkest.

County Name	Total # of Schools	Participation %	Gap to 70% (# kids)
PHILADELPHIA	313	57%	15,249
MONTGOMERY	159	31%	8,924
LEHIGH	79	36%	7,934
ALLEGHENY	287	55%	7,739
LANCASTER	123	43%	6,498
BUCKS	121	32%	6,153
LUZERNE	65	48%	4,501
BERKS	104	54%	4,144
CHESTER	104	36%	3,958
YORK	121	54%	3,814
NORTHAMPTON	68	46%	3,596



NKH Measurement



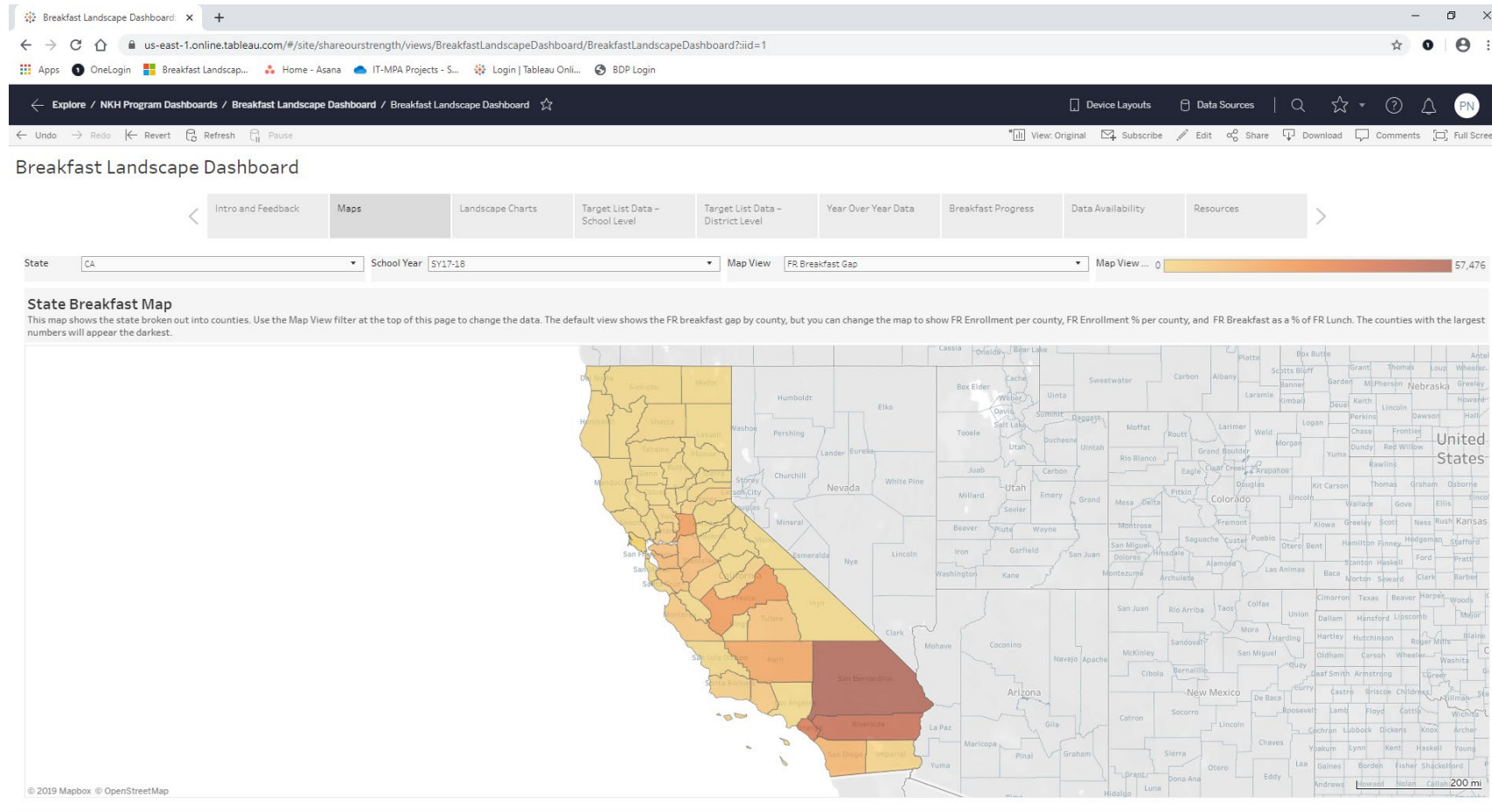
Example from Texas:

Participation Details

Target Area	Year 1 Baseline (SY15-16)			Year 2 Progress (SY16-17)*			Change from Baseline	
	FRP Lunch ADP	FRP Breakfast ADP	Breakfast ADP %	FRP Lunch ADP	FRP Breakfast ADP	Breakfast ADP %	Additional Children Served	Breakfast ADP %
Beaumont	11,737	7,172	61%	11,473	7,072	62%	(99)	1%
Dallas	109,936	90,809	83%	115,118	94,845	82%	4,036	0%
Garland	29,824	13,390	45%	29,302	14,246	49%	856	4%
Irving	22,659	13,490	60%	22,158	14,671	66%	1,181	7%
La Vega	2,226	1,296	58%	2,283	1,350	59%	54	1%
Marlin	744	450	61%	725	438	60%	(12)	0%
Mesquite	24,413	9,014	37%	23,906	9,145	38%	130	1%
Pasadena	35,252	16,823	48%	35,666	18,466	52%	1,643	4%
Port Arthur	6,029	3,037	50%	6,356	3,224	51%	187	0%
Spring	20,148	12,834	64%	22,796	14,868	65%	2,034	2%
Temple	5,151	2,871	56%	4,869	2,740	56%	(131)	1%
Waco	10,696	6,314	59%	10,541	6,429	61%	114	2%
Total	278,814	177,500	64%	285,194	187,493	66%	9,993	2%

Collaboration with IT Team

Example from Breakfast Landscape Dashboard





Current Data Projects

- **School Meal Trends with CEP**
 - Lindsey Turner
- **Texting Referral Project with m-Relief**
 - <https://www.mrelief.com/>





THANK YOU

- Margaret Read
- mread@strength.org



Niá:wen நிர்வீ ◁ + ▷ + masi chok 唔該
நர்ஸ்டர்ந்ந் **Thank You** T'ooyaksiy 'nisim' Graciās
 谢谢 აღწერა Miiigwech ありがとうございます
Merci Obrigado **Se:kenh:**



Upcoming Work Group Meetings

Drinking Water: April 28th @ 12:30pm EST

Water Safety in California Public Schools Following Implementation of School Drinking Water Policies, Isioma Umunna, MSc
Contact Mary Katherine Poole (mkpoole@hsph.harvard.edu) for more details.

Early Childhood: April 19th @ 1pm EST

EC and WIC Work Group Student Research Spotlight 2021
Contact Alison Tovar (alison_tovar@uri.edu) for more details.

Food Service Guidelines: April 27th @ 2pm EST

Nutrition in Midwestern State Department of Corrections Prisons: A Comparison of Nutritional Offerings to Commonly Utilized Nutritional Standards, CAPT Mitchel K. Holliday, EdD, RDN, FAND and Kelli Richardson, RDN
Contact Bethany Williams (bethany-williams@ouhsc.edu) for more details.

Healthy Food Retail: April 20th @ 12-1pm ET

SNAP Retail Policy & Evaluation: USDA Update from COVID-19 and Beyond
Panel Presenters: Jordan Jones, Research Agricultural Economist, USDA ERS, Andrea Gold, Director, Retailer Policy and Management Division, USDA FNS, Eric Williams, Social Science Research Analyst, USDA FNS
Contact Kirsten Arm (kirsten.arm@duke.edu) for more details.

Rural Food Access: April 15th @ 12pm EST

Creciendo en Salud: Systems Change to Support Healthy Eating among Latino Youth and their Families in Benton County, Oregon, Dr. Megan Patton-López
Contact Kyle Busse (kybusse@live.unc.edu) for more details.

School Wellness: April 13th @ 2pm EST

Understanding Teacher Wellbeing and Social Support for Physical Activity in a Diverse School District during the COVID-19 Crisis, Dr. Anne Escaron
Contact Amsie Hecht (ahlecht2009@gmail.com) or Ann Kuhn (APullingKuhn@som.umaryland.edu) for more details.

WIC Research Learning Collaborative: April 15th @ 2:00pm EST

Brainstorm Session for Research Ideas on WIC Policy Changes
Contact wicretailresearch_lc@duke.edu for more details.





**Want to learn more about NOPREN
or join the network?
Visit <https://nopren.ucsf.edu>
or contact NOPREN@ucsf.edu**