



Hannah Olin, Antonio Bianchi, and Nicolas Favreau

May 2, 2017

Analysis of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program aim to provide healthy and affordable meals to students in schools across America. Prominent issues have arisen in the Capital Region in regards to inadequate federal funding for high-needs school districts, as they are restricted in the foods they can purchase.

Scope of the Problem

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federal program that serves approximately 31 million students nationwide (USDA 2013). In New York State, an average of 1,063,350 students participated in the NSLP (Hunger Solutions 2016). Public school districts must participate in the NSLP, which sets specific guidelines for meals, and includes the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Currently, reimbursements given to schools for every free or reduced meal they serve are not sufficient enough to pay for quality food that meets the nutritional requirements. This is a significant issue due to the fact that several school districts in the Capital Region are Community Eligible districts, meaning they rely heavily on federal reimbursements and funding. Conversely, medium- to high-income school districts are considered Provision 2 districts, and have more funding through Discretionary Funds, which they receive from taxes paid by the community. At the current reimbursement rates, schools have no other option than to serve the students meals that are not as healthy as many programs would like to see.

Similarly, for small local farms to become eligible as a buying source for schools, they must undergo an expensive and repetitive certification process which many farms do not have the resources, both financial and knowledge to do. The cost of undergoing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification every year is not practical for small local farms. There are only two farms in the Capital Region that are able to provide their produce with this certification. These two farms grow only apples, limiting the variety of food that can be offered by the school districts (USDA 2013).

Current Policy

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) was created in 1948 under the Truman administration. The objective of the NSLP is to ensure that students get the nutrition they need during the school day, as many families across America cannot provide their children with adequate meals at home. In 1966, the School Breakfast Program (SBP) was introduced (USDA 2013) to supplement the NSLP, as it was found many children

do not eat breakfast at home due to financial instability or parents who may not have the time to prepare and feed their children full, health balanced meals. As these are federally-funded programs, there are budget restrictions and specific nutritional requirements that schools must follow in order to receive reimbursements.



In recent years, the NSLP has undergone a transformation regarding nutritional requirements. For grades K-8, school lunches must consist of .5 cups of fruit, .75 cups of vegetables, 1 ounce of grains, 1 ounce of meats/meat alternatives, and 1 fluid cup of milk on a daily basis. School breakfasts for grades K-12 must consist of 1 cup of fruit, 1 ounce of grains, and 1 fluid cup of milk per day. In grades 9-12, lunches must include of 1 cup of fruit, 1 cup of vegetables, 2 ounces of grains, 2 ounces of meats/meat alternatives, and 1 fluid cup of milk daily (USDA 2017).

Figure 1 is what the USDA requires of the National School Lunch program. Figure 2 is the USDA's My Plate recommendation as to what is a healthy and balanced meal. This program works under the assumption that children are receiving more proteins and grains at home to make up for the lack of availability during school. Along with that, there is no restriction on the amount of sugar served in each meal. The only four restrictions identified include: calories, sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat. (FDA 2008). Clearly, there is a difference in what is recommended to the school districts and what is considered healthy.

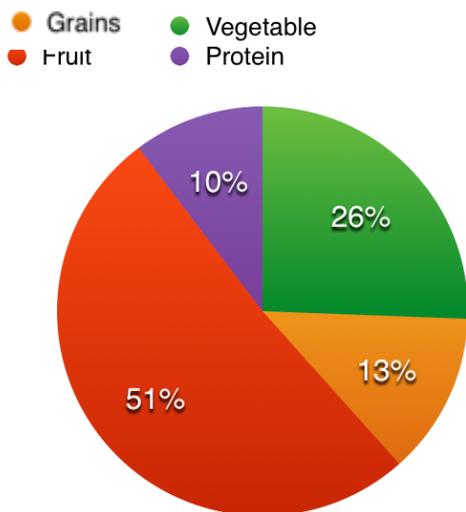


Figure 1

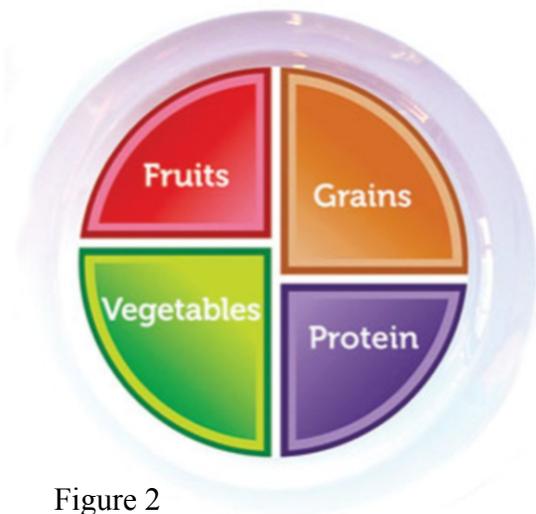


Figure 2

In order to secure certain levels of government funding, schools must meet specific eligibility requirements based on their numbers of free and reduced lunch students. Entitlement Funding is a form of government support that provides schools with cash reimbursements per meal. All children attending Entitlement Funding schools can participate in the National School Lunch Program. The 3 types of entitlement funding are DOD Fresh, Produce Pilot, and Ag Commodities.

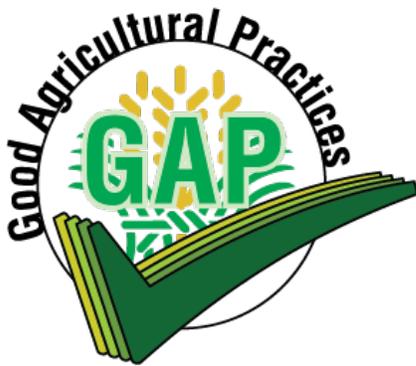
Community Eligibility (CE) is designated for schools with high numbers of low-income students to provide free breakfast and lunch to every student without the need to track eligibility in the cafeteria or collect meal applications. CE schools are those that have 40 percent or more of their students certified for free meals without needing to fill out a paper application due to factors such as: living in a household that receives SNAP/Food Stamps or TANF cash assistance, foster care, Head Start enrollment, homelessness, and migrant status. In January 2017, there were 13,350 families in the combined counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady that received TANF cash assistance and were eligible for free meals (OTDA 2017).

Similar to Entitlement Funding and CE, Provision 2 (P2) schools are able to offer free meals to all of their students, as many P2 schools have 75 percent or more of their students listed as low-income. In P2 schools, every student can receive free meals regardless of their household's income, and paper applications for free and reduced-price meals are typically collected every four years (USDA 2014).



The Non-Profit Food Service Account (NPFSA) is an account with the majority of a school's funds, which is used for a variety of operations and purchases for the school district. Most schools are hesitant to use this account for high quality produce, which could fall outside of their operating budget. Additionally, the NPFSA requires a bidding process when purchasing produce for amounts larger than \$3,500 in order to ensure that the school is being fiscally responsible with tax-payers' dollars. The terms of procurement are that the schools purchase from the provider based on who is most responsive, most responsible with the handling of their products, offering the lowest price, and geographically favorable.

One of the most significant regulations policies imposed on entitlement funds is that of Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) certification. GAP and GHP certifications are voluntary audits that food sources undergo to ensure their products are produced and handled in the healthiest and safest way possible (FDA 2016). The standards for GAP/GHP certification are set by industry food safety practices and the USDA through their "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" (FDA 2016). If a school is purchasing food with Entitlement Funding they must buy from a GAP/GHP certified source. Examples of certified sources include the USDA Agricultural Commodities, the Department of Defense's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DOD Fresh), and Produce Pilot. DOD Fresh is able to provide food at low costs to schools due to their large purchase orders and the USDA Agricultural Commodities program meets standards for a variety of product for schools (USDA 2017).



In New York, there are only 10 GAP certified Produce Pilot vendors, including Ginsberg's Foods, Inc. and Goold Orchards, the only 2 located in the Capital Region, and they only produce apples (USDA 2013). The cost

of voluntary GAP audits ranges from \$500 to well into the thousands, and the audits must be conducted individually and at an additional cost for each crop. Therefore, many small, local farms can not participate in wholesale markets that require GAP, limiting schools' variety of food sources for entitlement funds.

Funding

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) runs the NSLP. The cost of the NSLP has steadily increased since its founding in 1946. In 2016, the NSLP had a fiscal budget of over \$12.2 billion and the NSBP was just over \$4.2 billion (USDA 2013).

To receive federal funding for the NSLP, states are required to contribute funds equal to 30 percent of the federal funds they received in 1980. The matching funds are frozen at 1980 levels to ensure that state required contributions are very small in comparison to the level they are being reimbursed. There is an exception for states with an exceptionally low per capita income. The per capita income in these states must be below the national per capita income, and the percentage of funds they match is subtracted for every percentage point they are below the national per capita income. For example, if the per capita income of New York State was four percentage points below the national per capita income New York would have to match 26 percent of the federal funds they received compared to 30 percent (Indicator Report 2016).

The USDA reimburses schools for free or reduced-price lunches either monthly or quarterly at a reimbursement rate determined at the end of every fiscal year. The amount of reimbursement a school receives is determined by multiplying the amount of free or reduced price lunches served by the federal reimbursement rate. The reimbursement rate is two cents higher in districts where 60 percent or more of the students qualify for free lunches (USDA 2013).



There were more than 175,000 students registered in the NSLP in the New York State Capital Region in 2008. Inside of the Capital Region, the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady enrolled 128,073 of these students in the programs and were reimbursed over \$13.6 million (Gillibrand 2014). As a result, funding has increased in every county for the past nine years, including the largest increase occurring in Schenectady County where the school district now receive 16.2% more than the previous year of NSLP funds (Indicator Report 2016).

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the State Education Department (NYSED) awarded close to \$325,000 in grants in 2015 to help build capacity for farm-to-school programs in six areas of New York State (Locally Grown 2016). In the Capital Region, Rensselaer County was a recipient of one of these grants and was awarded \$61,889 to reach out to farmers and conduct the proper training to initiate the program in the districts of the county (NYS Governors Office

2015). While the results from the grant will not be released until the end of 2017 or 2018, the state budget for 2016-17 included \$550,000 for farm-to-school initiatives.

Just under 300 out of 950 total New York school districts participated in farm-to-school initiatives in 2015. These districts spent over \$45.3 million on local food. On average, 11% of all New York State school district's food budgets were spent on locally grown products. Also, a survey conducted by the USDA in 2015 reported another 16% of districts planned to start farm-to-school activities (Locally Grown 2016).

Strengths of the NSLP Program

The NSLP has good intentions of providing healthy and balanced meals to the children in schools across America. There have been movements towards having schools try to obtain more of their fresh food from local sources through programs such as the Pilot Project for Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables (USDA 2017). There are also provisions in place that allow for schools with higher levels of low income families to have all of the children be exempt from paying for meals.



Opportunities for Improvement of the NSLP Program

While these programs have many positive aspects, there are some areas that could be improved. The process for local farms to become GAP certified is lengthy and costly. These local sources are often not even considered as an option because there are larger programs that can provide the food at a much cheaper price. When schools are budgeting their own NPFSA, it is rarely if ever spent on buying fresh food for healthy meals. It is more than likely spent on the school operations, inexpensive food. Only schools in wealthier areas are able to opt out of a program like this.



Key Organizations

- **School Districts:** Schools districts across the country have an important role to play when choosing the food they will serve to their students. Some school districts have attempted to actively serve local and healthy food, while other schools are not as quick to offer local options.
- **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS):** The FNS is a segment of the USDA and has the goal of ensuring access to healthy food. They are also responsible for the nutrition assistance programs and child nutrition programs. These involve SNAP, WIC, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.
- **Agricultural Marketing System (AMS):** The AMS is tasked with ensuring fair and efficient marketing. The AMS supports American farmers, and many other facets of the agricultural industry.
- **Farm to Institution NYS:** This NYS program works to strengthen the food economy and improve the overall health of the citizens. They seek out to support regional networks and partnerships.
- **Capital Roots in Troy, NY:** Capital Roots works to provide fresh and healthy food to local communities that lack the access that other areas have. They also have urban farms and a grow center where they can grow food locally. Capital Roots is in the process of developing a Food Assessment of the Capital Region.

Glossary

Community Eligibility: Community Eligibility (CE) enables schools with high numbers of low-income students to provide free breakfast and lunch to every student without the need to track eligibility in the cafeteria or collect meal applications. CE schools are those that have 40% or more of their students certified for free meals without a paper application due (USDA 2013).

Provision 2: an alternative application process for schools that only requires students to fill out paper applications for free and reduced meals once every four years. Reimbursements are determined based on the percentage of free and reduced price meals every month during a base year (USDA 2013).

Discretionary Funding: annual allocations that determine how much money the government can give during a fiscal year (USDA 2017).

Entitlement Funding: amount chosen by states for schools to make purchases through DOD Fresh (USDA 2017).

Sample Menu

Welcome to our Lunch Cafe @ Albany Elementary

April
2017

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3 Oven Roasted Chicken Whole Wheat Dinner Roll Animal Crackers Mashed Potatoes Broccoli Tips w/ Ranch Dip Lite Ranch Dressing Pineapple Cup	4 Waffles ✓ Turkey Sausage Links Hash Browns Baby Carrots Lite Ranch Dressing Mixed Fruit	5 Crispy Chicken Patty Sandwich Corn Celery Sticks Lite Ranch Dressing Diced Pears	6 Turkey Nachos Grande Black Beans Cucumber Coins Lite Ranch Dressing Applesauce	7 Cheesy Stuffed Breadsticks with Marinara Sauce ✓ Glazed Carrots Caesar Side Salad Sliced Peaches
10 Cheeseburger Vegetarian Baked Beans Cucumber Coins Lite Ranch Dressing Pineapple Cup	11 Loaded Chicken Nachos Corn Baby Carrots Lite Ranch Dressing Mixed Fruit	12 Baked Chicken Nuggets Whole Wheat Dinner Roll Animal Crackers Brown Sugar Glazed Carrots Broccoli Tips w/ Ranch Dip Diced Pears	13 Cheese Pizza ✓ Broccoli Celery Sticks Lite Ranch Dressing Applesauce	14 Good Friday No School
17	18	19	20	21
Spring Recess No School				
24 Hot Dog on a Bun Baked Sweet Potato Fries Veggie Dippers Pineapple Cup	25 Chicken & Gravy Bowl Whole Wheat Dinner Roll Corn Broccoli Tips w/ Ranch Dip Mixed Fruit	26 Turkey Nachos Grande Black Beans Cucumber Coins Lite Ranch Dressing Diced Pears	27 Meatball Parm Sandwich Steamed Green Beans Celery Sticks Lite Ranch Dressing Applesauce	28 Cheese Pizza Slice ✓ Broccoli Baby Carrots Lite Ranch Dressing Sliced Peaches



Produce of the Month

Bananas



We proudly support clean, organic, local and sustainable agriculture.

We've partnered with Stonyfield to bring you the very best in yogurt. Everything they make isn't just delicious, it's certified organic - made without the use of toxic persistent pesticides, artificial hormones,

antibiotics and GMOs. Stonyfield also

supports family farms and they take care of the world around us.

Follow the QR code to learn more.



LUNCH PRICES

All Students attending ACSD are entitled to one complete lunch at no charge.

Additional lunch \$2.25
Milk/Juice \$.50

LUNCH INCLUDES

Skim Milk/1% Milk /Fat Free
Chocolate Milk / Fresh Vegetable /
Fresh Fruit/ Grain /Protein
WE OFFER BREAKFAST DAILY
Alternate Menu Available Daily
Cheese Sandwich on Whole Wheat
PBJ on Whole Wheat

If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this menu please contact your Food Service Director Stephanie Lasher 475-

Daily Salad Lunch Offered:

Garden Salad with Cheese and WW Dinner Rolls

Deli Sandwich Lunch Offered:

Monday: Turkey and Cheese Sandwich on WW Bread

Tuesday: Turkey Bologna and Cheese on WW Bread

Wednesday: Turkey and Cheese on WW Bread

Thursday: Turkey Ham and Cheese on WW Bread

Friday: Tuna on WW Bread

FRESH FRUIT AVAILABLE DAILY

✓ Vegetarian 🍎 Healthier Choice Pork

*Consuming raw or under cooked meat, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of food borne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions. Menu is subject to change, notice posted when available. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

References

- FDA. 2008. "Guidance for Industry." Last Modified July 2016. <https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/ProducePlantProducts/ucm064458.html>.
- Guthrie, Joanne. 2016. "National School Lunch Program." United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/national-school-lunch-program.aspx>.
- Hunger Solutions. 2016. "School Breakfast: Reducing Child Hunger, Bolstering Student Success." Last Modified March 2016. http://hungersolutionsny.org/sites/default/files/included/sbr_executive_summary_3_4_16.pdf
- "National School Lunch Program Monthly." n.d. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/36slmonthly.pdf>.
- NYS Council on Women and Families. 2016. "Indicator Report: Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch." http://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfmsubIndicatorID=52&indYear1=2007&go.x=17&go.y=25&go=Submit&indYear2=2016.
- NYS Governors Office. 2015. "Governor Cuomo Announces Awards For Six Farm to School Programs Across New York State." Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. December 17. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-awards-six-farm-school-programs-across-new-york-state>.
- Office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. n.d. "New Gillibrand Report: Nearly 3 Million New York School children Enrolled In National School Lunch Program." <https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/School%20Lunches%20Report.pdf>.
- Office Of The New York State Comptroller. 2016. "Locally Grown: Farm-to-School Programs in New York State." NYS Office of Budget and Policy Analysis. https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/other/farm_to_school_2016.pdf.
- OTDA. 2017. "Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistics." Last Modified March 2017. <http://otda.ny.gov/resources/caseload/2017/2017-01-stats.pdf>
- UDSA. 2017. "Community Eligibility Provision." Last updated January 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>.
- USDA. 2013. "National School Lunch Program." Last Modified September 2013. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>.
- USDA. 2017. "Nutrition Standards for School Meals." Last updated January 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.
- USDA. 2013. "School Breakfast Program." Last Modified September 2013. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sbp/SBPfactsheet.pdf>.
- USDA. 2017. "USDA Procurement Regulations." Last updated January 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/usda-procurement-regulations>.

Community Policy Institute

The Community Policy Institute builds capacity surrounding policy within the Capital Region. We provide researched-based policy information to our community partners who use the information to modify best practices and advocate for policies that will further the development and effectiveness of direct community engagement.

This brief was produced by CPI Undergraduate Fellows, community experts, and faculty.

Hannah Olin, Nicolas Favreau, and Antonio Bianchi

Funding generously
provided by:

The Review Foundation
&
The Corella & Bertram F.
Bonner Foundation

SIENACollege
Community Policy Institute