CEP: Best Practices for Success

Mieka Sanderson, FRAC
Heather Hopwood, USDA
Candice Hagar, For Wayne Community Schools (IN)
Ann Pennington, Hollister School District (CA)

July 13, 2016
Agenda

• Community Eligibility Overview
  • Heather Hopwood, Food & Nutrition Services, USDA

• Best Practices for Eliminating School Meal Applications in CEP Schools
  • Mieka Sanderson, Food Research & Action Center

• Community Eligibility & Breakfast in the Classroom
  • Candice Hagar, Fort Wayne Community Schools, IN

• Community Eligibility Lessons Learned
  • Ann Pennington, Hollister School District, CA
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Heather Hopwood
USDA Food & Nutrition Service
CEP: Proven Tool for Combating Child Hunger

• ~16 million American children live in households that struggle to put food on the table
• Allows high-poverty schools to serve no-cost meals to all enrolled students for up to four consecutive school years
• Individual schools, groups of schools, or entire school districts may elect CEP
What Makes CEP Different?

• Student eligibility for no-cost meals determined based on community poverty (rather than household income)

• Eliminates household applications
  • relies on direct certification process and other means of certifying students
  • SNAP, TANF, FDPIR participation, or status as migrant youth, homeless, foster child, or Head Start
CEP Benefits Everyone!

**Students:**
- Enjoy healthy meals at school at no cost to students
- With all meals served at no charge, there is no stigma attached to eating a school meal

**Families:**
- Do not have to fill out household applications
- Do not have to worry about refilling meal accounts, or whether their child has an opportunity to eat at school

**Schools:**
- Reduces paperwork and administrative costs
- Streamlines the meal service operation
- Less time waiting in lines and more time eating means students are less likely to discard food and more likely to come to class better nourished and ready to learn
CEP National Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,962</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>8.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eligibility

• Schools, groups of schools, or districts must:
  • Have an **identified student percentage (ISP)** of at least 40% as of April 1st of the school year prior to implementing CEP
  • Participate in or agree to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)
  • Have a record of administering the Programs in accordance with regulations
How is the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) calculated?

Identified Student % = \frac{\text{# of Identified Students}}{\text{Total # of enrolled students}} \times 100

- **Identified Students** are low income children who are certified for free school meals without the use of a household application
  - Students certified based on categorical eligibility (e.g. directly certified with SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or based on status as migrant youth, homeless, foster child, Head Start)
How Are Meals Claimed?

• The ISP is multiplied by a factor of **1.6** to determine the % of total meals served that will be reimbursed at the Federal FREE rate

• The remaining % of total meals is reimbursed at the Federal PAID rate

• If ISP ≥ 62.5, all meals reimbursed at FREE rate (62.5 x 1.6 = 100)

1.6 multiplier approximates free and reduced % if applications were still collected
When do LEAs have to cover operating costs?

• When the level of Federal reimbursement received is less than the cost of providing all students no-cost meals

• Same as in Provision 2/3 schools

• Same as standard operating procedures when the level of Federal reimbursement is less than the cost of providing meals
 Interested in electing CEP

• Figure out the numbers
  – Maximize direct certification
  – Check financial viability (USDA Estimator Tool)

• Communicate with stakeholders

• Talk with State agency
CEP Resource Center

• Learn About CEP
  • CEP basics
  • Webinar recordings

• Is CEP Right for You?
  • Determining school/LEA eligibility
  • Financial viability

• Funding Sources
  • Title I & E-Rate
  • Alternate SES measures

• Spread the Word: Outreach & Communication
  • Sample presentation
  • Blog posts

• Implementation: Policy & Guidance
  • Guidance manual

• Partner Resources

GO TO:
What’s on the Horizon?

• Ongoing efforts to improve Direct Certification

• Monitor uptake among highly eligible schools (ISP ≥ 60%)
  • Targeted technical assistance

• Final Rule (Summer 2016)

• National Evaluation Study (Data collection in SY 2016-17)
USDA is Here to Help!

• Visit our “Help Desk” to speak with subject matter experts

• Come see us in the Exhibit Hall ➔ USDA Lane Booths #2047-2053

• Become a Team Nutrition School ➔ www.fns.usda.gov/tn/join-team

• Visit us online

facebook.com/USDA  @USDANutrition  @TeamNutrition  fns.usda.gov
Best Practices for Eliminating School Meal Applications in CEP Schools

Mieka Sanderson, Policy Analyst
Food Research & Action Center

July 13, 2016
Food Research & Action Center

Who we are:
• National anti-hunger organization in Washington DC
• Nonprofit and nonpartisan

What we do:
• Conduct research and policy analysis
• Serve as a clearinghouse
• Provide technical assistance
• Lobby Congress
Other Programs that Traditionally Utilize School Meal Application Data

- Title I Allocations and Accountability
- Erate
- State education funding
- Other child nutrition programs
- AP/SAT test fee waivers
- Local organizations, e.g. youth sports leagues, scholarships
State Approaches in the Absence of School Meal Applications

**Use Existing Data:**
- ISP x 1.6
- Freeze Free & Reduced-Price Percentage
- Data from other programs

**Collect Household Income Data:**
- Annually
- Every 4 school years
Using Identified Student Percentage
* 1.6 multiplier

Benefits:
- Readily available
- Compatible with many existing data systems

Considerations:
- May not exactly match previous free & reduced-price percentage
- Does not identify the individual income levels of all children
“Freeze” approach – using prior year FRP data

Benefits:
• Prevents a sudden change in poverty level at schools adopting community eligibility
• No immediate need for further data collection

Considerations:
• Does not account for shifts over time unless updated (some states do reassess after a few years)
• Does not capture individual-income data
• May not be comparable to newer data from non-CEP schools
Utilizing data from other programs

**Benefits:**

- Data from other means-tested programs is typically subject to rigorous accountability controls
- Data is readily available and already commonly used by school districts

**Considerations:**

- Could miss low-income children whose families do not participate in means-tested programs
- Must take care to ensure CEP and non-CEP schools are treated consistently
**Alternative Income Surveys**

**Benefits:**
- Generates income data for each household/student
- Can collect less frequently than annually; i.e. every 4 years

**Considerations:**
- Maintains annual paperwork CEP was designed to remove
- Costs cannot be covered by school food service account
Best Practices for Alternative Forms

- Do not need to collect forms for identified students
- Prominent disclaimer that the form is not a lunch application
- Include a clear explanation what the data will be used for
- Remove all references to school meals, especially if opting to use a similar form
- Ensure you are collecting only necessary information
- Include the income form in enrollment materials or integrate into an online portal to limit paperwork burden on parents and families
- Provide translations for LEP families
Simplifying Forms

They CAN be much simpler than school meal applications:

- Only needs to establish size of household and income level
- Check box list of income ranges can be used rather than report of exact income
- Fields such as last four digits of SSN can be dropped
Example – Tennessee

http://www.tn.gov/education/article/community-eligibility-provision-cep

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number in Household</th>
<th>(Fill in the blank)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please check the box below that represents your Annual Gross Income:

- □ Less than $21,590
- □ Between $21,590 and $29,101
- □ Between $29,101 and $36,612
- □ Between $36,612 and $44,123
- □ Between $44,123 and $51,634
- □ Between $51,634 and $59,145
- □ Between $59,145 and $66,656
- □ Between $66,656 and $74,167
- □ Between $74,167 and $81,618
- □ Between $81,618 and $89,189
- □ Between $89,189 and $96,700
- □ Between $96,700 and $104,211
- □ Over $104,211
Example – Iowa

https://www.educateiowa.gov/community-eligibility-provision-schools-cep

Household Economic Survey

To qualify for school fee waivers and other benefits please provide the following information.

There are _________ people in my household, including all children and adults.

The total annual income for all people in the household before any deductions for taxes, insurance, medical expenses, child support, etc. is _________ per year.

Students:

Name       School       grade

__________________________________________  ____________________  ________
__________________________________________  ____________________  ________

☐ Additional students are listed on the back of this page.

I certify that the total income for the household reported is accurate.

__________________________________________  ________  ____________________

Signature       Date       Phone
Contact Information

Mieka Sanderson
Policy Analyst, Food Research & Action Center
Email: Msanderson@frac.org
Direct line: 202-640-1080
Community Eligibility Program (CEP) and Breakfast in the Classroom

Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS)
Candice Hagar, Director Nutrition Services
Fort Wayne Community Schools

- 52 schools – Urban District
- ~ 31,000 students
- 15 cooking kitchens
- 37 satellite operations – primarily elementary
- Nutrition Process Center – packs daily
- F/R Rate of ~ 70%
- 250 Full and Part Time Staff
FWCS Journey to CEP

• July 2013 – Annual National Conference (ANC)

• Spent 6 months running numbers to determine if we could implement CEP and be OK financially.

• 1,000,000 dollar operating margin
Journey cont’d

• Determined that if participation did not increase I would be able to break even. Loss of 1M operating margin.

• Determined that if participation increases by 10% outlook would be more comfortable.

• Also determined that if participation increased we would not have space in café.
Journey cont’d

• Brought the team together to discuss the logistics of serving Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC).
• Began to formulate plans for implementation but needed approval from superintendent for both CEP and BIC.
• Prepared presentation for cabinet complete with numbers, spreadsheets, graphs and charts.
• Superintendent wanted to be sure that once we did this that we would be able to sustain it – no turning back!!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group I</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved for 1% or less</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely Handicapped</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely Handicapped Breakfast</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Traditional Method

#### Total Meals Claimed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Free</th>
<th>Reduced</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Meals Claimed</td>
<td>747,315</td>
<td>65,196</td>
<td>77,187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Total Breakfasts Claimed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FED Breakfast Reimbursement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Breakfasts Claimed</td>
<td>666,979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lunches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reduced-Price</th>
<th>Student Prices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced-Price</td>
<td>$0.30</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult-Price</td>
<td>$1.10</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Lunch Revenue (student payment)</td>
<td>$104,404.60</td>
<td>$96,346.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Lunch Revenue</td>
<td>$1,637,965.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Revenue Based on Traditional Claiming: $7,875,954.30

### Community Eligibility Option (CEO) Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Breakensta Claimed</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Enrollment</td>
<td>15.65/7,662</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 % of Identified Students</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 % of Meals Reimbursed at Free Rate</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 % of Meals Reimbursed at Reduced Rate</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$96,668</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Lunches Claimed</td>
<td>2,274,283</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Increase in Meals Served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Breakfast % Increase</th>
<th>Lunch % Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Revenue Based on CEO Claiming: $6,605,238.25

### Traditional Claiming = $7,875,954.30

### CEO Claiming = $6,605,238.25

CEO with Projected Increase – $7,567,305.30

Traditional Claiming Provides Greater Reimbursement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Method</th>
<th>Community Eligibility Option (CEO) Method</th>
<th>Increase in Meals Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Meals Claimed</td>
<td>Total Meals Claimed</td>
<td>Breakfast % Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Breakfasts Claimed</td>
<td>Total Lunches Claimed</td>
<td>% of Meals Reimbursed at Free Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$886,376.05</td>
<td>$2,058,747.31</td>
<td>% of Meals Reimbursed at the Paid Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Prices</td>
<td>Reduced-Price</td>
<td>Reduced-Price</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$0.30</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CASH Breakfast Revenue (student payments)</td>
<td>CASH Lunch Revenue (student payments)</td>
<td>Reduced-Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$34,959.20</td>
<td>$251,828.70</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Breakfast Revenue</td>
<td>$921,335.25</td>
<td>Total Lunch Revenue</td>
<td>$2,310,576.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue Based on Traditional Claiming: $3,231,911.26</td>
<td>Total Revenue Based on CEO Claiming: $3,265,430.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|          | Enrollment | Identified Students | Total Breakfasts Claimed | 494,157 |
|          | 5,809      | 3,445               | Total Lunches Claimed | 825,236 |
|          | 1          | 2                   | Total Breakfast Revenue | $893,280.01 |
|          | 2          | 3                   | Total Lunch Revenue | $2,372,150.76 |
|          | 3          | 4                   | Increased Breakfast Revenue | $186,791.35 |
|          | 4          | 5                   | Increased Lunch Revenue | $237,215.08 |
|          |            | 6                   | Total Increased Revenue: | $424,006.42 |
|          |            | 7                   | Total Increased Meals: | 181355.00 |
|          |            | 8                   | CEO with Projected Increase = | $3,689,437.19 |

Traditional Claiming = $3,231,911.26 vs. CEO Claiming = $3,265,430.77

CEO Claiming Provides Greater Reimbursement
Journey cont’d

• Superintendent gave approval!!! Yeah!!! Superintendent wanted implementation by grade status. All or nothing!!!

• Determined that we could do all elementary and middle schools

• Went back to running numbers to put schools in groups that would maximize reimbursements. Determined 3 different groups.

• Now the hard work really began!!!
Principal and Teacher Education

• Prepared letters to all principals with FAQ’s
• Met with individual schools Quality Initiative Teams (QIT)
• Prepared letters to be sent to all parents
• Trained the schools on the new process.
Support Services Education

• Met with Custodial Staff
• Met with Acct. Payable/Receivable
• Met with Nutrition Process Center
• Purchased the equipment needed to package meals for BIC.
• School year 2014-2015 implemented both CEP and BIC simultaneously
Barriers and Solutions

• Concerns of taking time away from instruction
  • Taught the students to eat while receiving instruction or...
  • Specified time for eating (10 min) before instruction then everything went into the trash

• How will we handle the spills
  • Provided menu that would minimize spills

• What were we going to do with the trash
  • Custodians would pick up at specified time instead of cleaning up the cafeteria

• Concerns of having food in the classroom (pests and rodents).
  • Provided special color trash cans for food only – picked up right away at specified time
Barriers and Solutions

• Some community members not happy
  • As parents realized the value to “no cost” meals happiness set back in.
  • No more meals taken away from students / alternative meals

• How will we determine Title I schools
  • Several Ways to determine Title I
    • Free/Reduced Data
    • Direct Certification
    • Formula using Free/Reduced #’s and District Poverty Count and Census Poverty Count then divided by # of enrollment
      • Ex: School A’s F/R is 427, District Poverty Count is 19448, and Census Poverty Count is 11449, and enrollment is 466
      • Equation is F/R divided by District Poverty Count times Census Poverty count divided by enrollment = Criteria for Title I
      • 427 divided by 19447=0.219 X 11449=251.38 divided by 466=53.95% which would qualify for Title I
Barriers and Solutions

• What about textbook assistance
  • Nutrition Services still supports district and takes applications - Fee charged back to district
  • Sent out periodic letters to parents reminding them
  • Targeted students that were on program prior year but still had not applied.
After Implementation Stats

• Elementary
  • Breakfast participation increased from ~25% to ~70%
  • Lunch participation increased from ~70% to ~80%

• Middle Schools
  • Breakfast participation increased from ~25% to ~60%
  • Lunch participation increased from ~85% to ~94%

• Revenues Increased
  • Without increase in participation – loss of 1M
  • With increase in participation – increase of $800,000 - ~5%
Estimated 10 Year Savings Stats

• Computer replacement costs
  • 31 schools @ ~ $850/per computer every 5 years for 10 years = $52,700

• Time saved in Application processing
  • Regular and Overtime ~ $600 per year
  • 10 years = $6000

• Time saved in Verification processing
  • Regular and Overtime ~ $600 per year
  • 10 years = $6000

• Postage Fees Saved from mailing notification letters
  • ~ 8,000 per year
  • 10 years = $80,000
CEP Wins

• More students enjoying breakfast and lunch – ready to learn
• No more lunch application
• Don’t use POS anymore – clicking
• Sped up lines
• Less time spent in verification process
• Postage savings
• Principals and teachers much happier because of less referrals
• Savings of computer hardware/software
CEP Wins

• Happier Staff – managers spending more time with students instead of behind a POS
• Less bank fees
• We Win, Students Win, Principals and Teachers Win, Families Win
Community Eligibility Lessons Learned

PRESPECTIVE FROM A SMALLER DISTRICT

ANN PENNINGTON, HOLLISTER SCHOOL DISTRICT
DISTRICT OVERVIEW

• 11 School with ~ 5600 enrolled, K-8
• Free/Reduced: 56% District wide
• 7 schools participate in CEP, 2 Groupings
• Manipulated groups to reach close to 50% ISP
• Group 1 is 48.62, Group 2 is 49.07
• Applied for and was granted CEP for SY 2014-15
Decisions that helped improve Participation and Results

• Eliminated reduced price fee charged for meals
• Reduced eligible students increased breakfast participation by 9% and lunch participation by 28%
• Implemented Universal free breakfast district wide
• Increased breakfast participation by 26%
• Lunch participation increased 15% after choosing CEP provision

Picture courtesy of Free Lance Paper
Other Considerations

- Staff time and printing costs changed with CEP implementation
- Prior to CEP, staff received extra time to process applications, this was eliminated altogether
- We went from processing ~2000 applications to processing ~600
- Printing costs dropped by 50%, paper costs dropped by 1/3
More than meets the eyes...

• Get ready - You need More food
• Had to play catch-up for a few weeks
• Longer lines-add key pads, stagger the release time to the cafeteria and add serving line(s) if possible
• Think outside the box: Snacks had to go and only reimbursable meals were offered during breaks
• Backlash for a bit but KIDS ARE HUNGRY-they will eat the food if it’s appetizing
Get the WORD out and They will come

- Some schools are CEP, some schools are Paying—the community needs to know
- Robodialers partially work, but parents don’t always listen
- Email is great but not all parents have emails
- Flyers sent home, at school and around the community
- Back to school nights, open house, etc.
- Secretaries, Cashiers and word of mouth
CEP student going to Paying Schools-What to do?

• Extended the 30 day cut off at the beginning of the school year—changed the eligibility status to be in compliance, but did not charge the 6th graders

• Sent notices home to every 6th grader and contacted by phone or email those that we did not hear back from

• After we were satisfied that we reached as many as we could, began charging. VERY LITTLE BACKLASH
Take the Plunge

• If your Cafeteria Fund is fairly healthy, try CEP out
• Takes away all the stigma associated with eating at school, everyone can eat at no charge and so everyone is equal.
• All student nutrition services programs are a balancing act, this may tip participation in your direction!
Contact Information

Ann Pennington
apennington@hesd.org
831-313-3384 cell
Questions?