



Support Universal School Meals

Why is the school lunch program so important?

School lunch is critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income, high-needs students—and ensures that students have nutrition they need throughout the day to learn.

Research shows that receiving free or reduced-price school lunches reduces food insecurity, obesity rates, and poor health.

Children often rely on this service for their meals for the day, and we must ensure children get nutrition needed to maintain a healthy body and mind. Healthy meals also improve behavior, increase attention span and foster a positive academic experience. Research has shown repeatedly that participation in free/reduced lunch programs increases learning in children.

In 2019-2020 school year, 1.5 million NYS children, or 53%, participated in the free/reduced school lunch program.

We must work to see that universal free school meals is available for all students, ensuring equity, removing associated stigma, and supporting all children in their wellness.

Support a free universal school meals program to all students statewide

NYS PTA supports a state-supported universal school meals program, in case the federal program is not extended past June 2022, to ensure all public school students are offered breakfast and lunch, free of charge.

Universal school meals programs reduce the stigma for students unable to afford meals, increase the number of students fed during the school day, and assist districts in streamlining their meal service operations. California and Maine will launch statewide programs starting in the 2022-23 school year.

Oppose the transfer of the School Lunch Program from SED to the Dept. of Ag & Markets

NYS PTA strongly opposes this transfer and ask that the legislature fully reject this proposal.

Currently, SED administers five federal Child Nutrition Programs and other food programs that generate an astounding \$1.4 billion funding directly to schools. Yet, SED receives no state administrative funding to support the implementation of these initiatives.

45 states lay these critical food programs with their Education Departments, and this change to Ag & Markets would actually require a federal waiver. Further, SED has developed both the personnel expertise, and the technology over the years to administer these critical programs for our children.

These functions must remain in the purview of SED, and we cannot accept anything less than SED's fantastic commitment and full attention to our School Lunch Program.