



**NYSED**

**OFFICE OF CHILD NUTRITION**

**NYS UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

**June 2025**





# QUESTIONS?

Type into the Q&A chat box



Sandy Creek CSD



# AGENDA

## Topics we will discuss:

- ★ Intro to NYS Universal Meals
- ★ Requirements for Participation
- ★ How to Meet Program Requirements
- ★ What to Do Now
- ★ Frequent Q & As
- ★ Questions







# NYS UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM

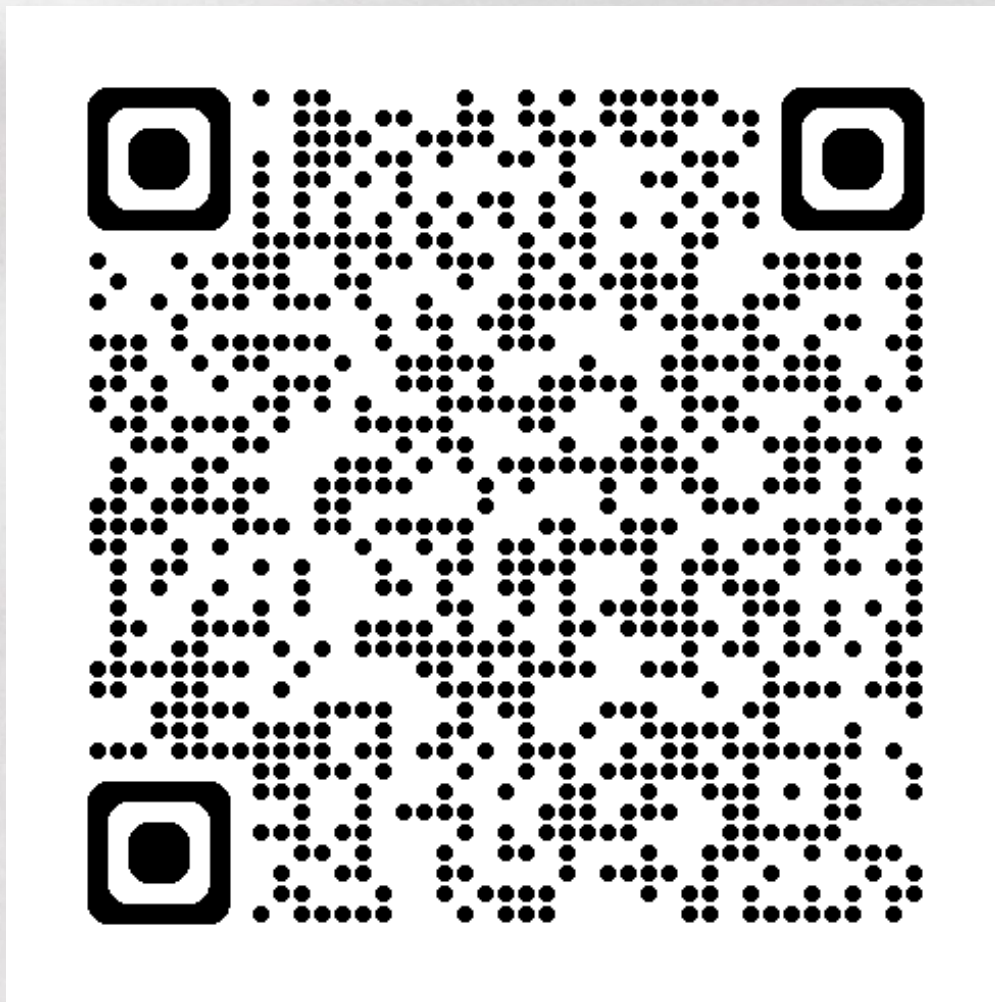
- Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year
- All NYS School Food Authorities (SFAs) are required to provide reimbursable school meals at no cost to all students
- SFAs receive “free rate” reimbursement for all meals



# APPLYING TO BE A NEW SFA?



## Application Request



## New SFA Webinar

Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> @ 1 pm

Registration





# What is *Free* in Universal Free Meals?

All federally reimbursable NSLP/SBP meals served

## What is *NOT Free* ?

Meals/Food not eligible for NSLP/SBP federal reimbursement

- Seconds
- A la carte sales (including milk)
- Adult meals
- Snacks
- Smart Snacks
- Meals/food provided to students that do not attend a participating school:
  - homeschooled students
  - virtual school students



# NYS UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS

## *SFA Requirements*

1. Maximize Federal Reimbursement
2. Promote SNAP
3. Maximize the Number of Students Eligible for federal free meals



Hoosic Valley CSD



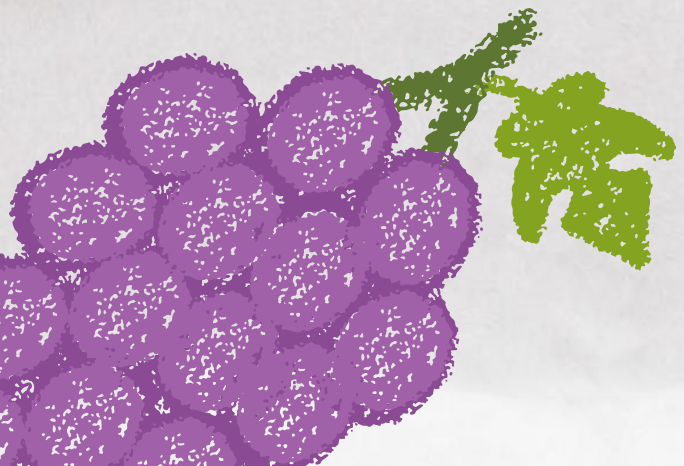
# MAXIMIZE FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT



1. Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
  - ✓ Maximize CEP school grouping
2. Provision 2

## Residential Child Care Institutions

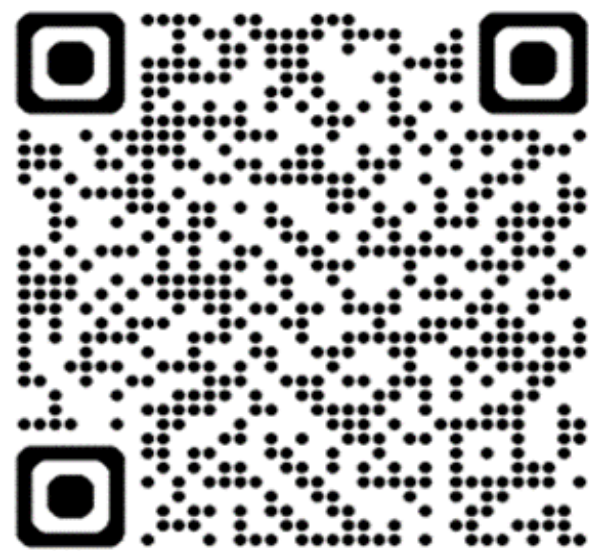
- without day students- continue standard counting and claiming
- with day students - operate Provision 2





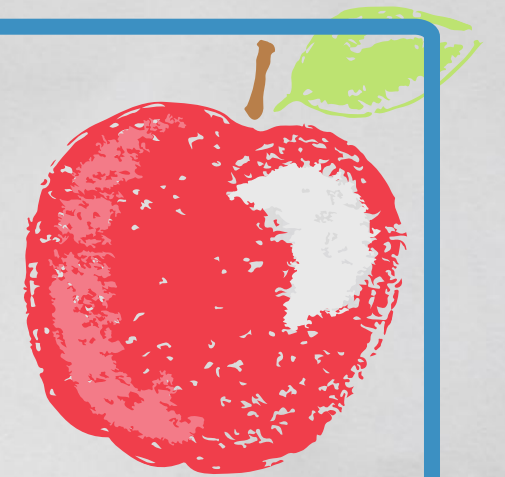
# COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP) with Universal Free School Meals

- Serve both Breakfast & Lunch
- Receive “free rate” reimbursement for all meals claimed
- Identified Student Percentage (ISP) 25% or more
  - Entire SFA
  - Group of RAs
  - Individual RA
- 4 year cycle



## Identified Students

- DCMP Students
- DCMP Extension Students
- Other Categorically eligible Students
  - homeless-migrant-foster-runaway-
  - headstart/evenstart



$$\frac{\text{Identified Students}}{\text{Enrolled Students}} \times 100 = \text{ISP}$$



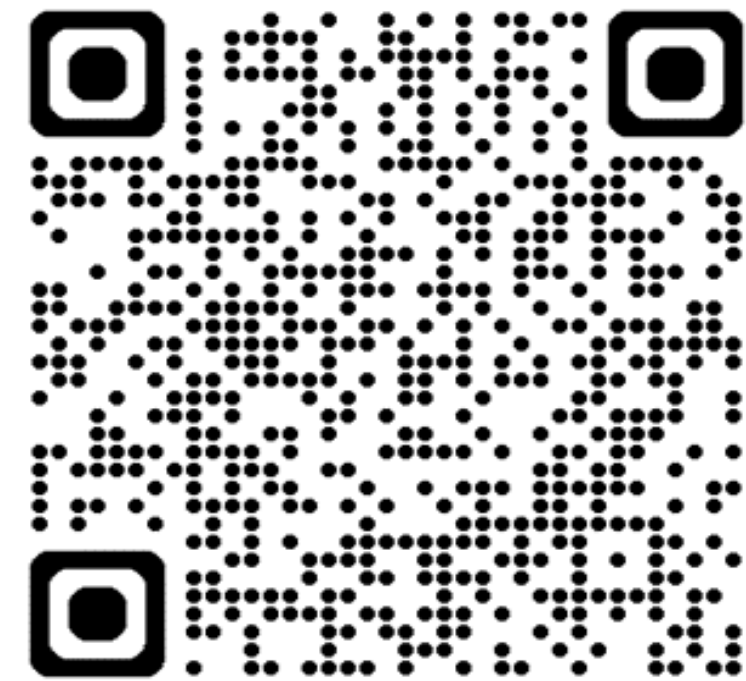
EVALUATING ISP GROUPS To maximize federal funding through CEP						
RA	RA Enrollment	RA ISP	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Bear ES	1200	34.27	22.45	25.74	34.27	25.06
Lainey MS	300	17.21			16.53	17.21
Blue HS	750	15.84		15.84		25.06
CEP Enrollment			0	1,500	1,200	1,950



# PROVISION 2 (P2)

- Serve Lunch *and/or* Breakfast
- First year = Base year
- 4 year cycle
- Extensions Available

Meals served in base year and non-base years are provided at no cost to students





# P2 Operations with Universal Free School Meals

## Base Year

- Make Individual Student F/R eligibility determinations
  - DCMP & Extensions
  - Other Categorically Eligible
  - Free/Reduced Income Applications
- Use Benefit Issuance System to Count & Claim Meals by Free, Reduced, and Paid Categories
- Conduct Verification
- SED reviews certifications

## Non-Base Years

- Count and Claim total meals served
- Monthly funding levels established in the base year are used in the subsequent three years

## ALL Years

- Provide all students free meals
- Receive “free rate” reimbursement for all meals claimed



# APPLICATION REMINDERS



- Only free and reduced price applications are needed
- Families can be encouraged, but not forced to complete
- Students that are directly certified or categorically eligible are determined free without an application



Albany City SD

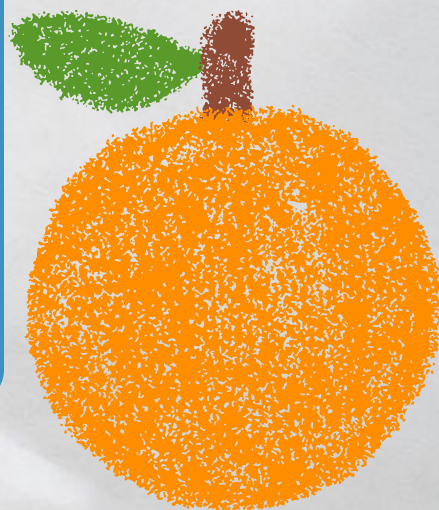


# P2 – End of 4 year Cycle

- Conduct DCMP with April 1 enrollment for each P2 building
- Move buildings into CEP, if able
- Remaining P2 Buildings:
  - Request to extend base year funding levels for 4 more years,  
*or*
  - Start a new base year



Cambridge CSD

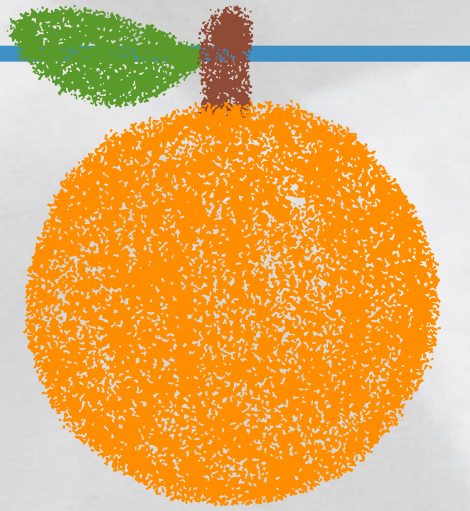




# SNAP OUTREACH



Families can apply



❖ Online

- [MyBenefits.ny.gov](https://mybenefits.ny.gov)
- [Access.nyc.gov](https://access.nyc.gov)

❖ Paper Application

- Local Department of Social Services

❖ Application Assistance

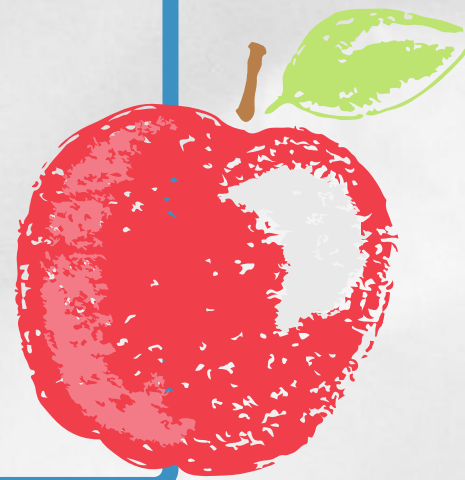
- [SnapHelpNY.org](https://snaphelpny.org)



# MAXIMIZE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL FREE MEALS

Conduct DCMP at least three times a year:

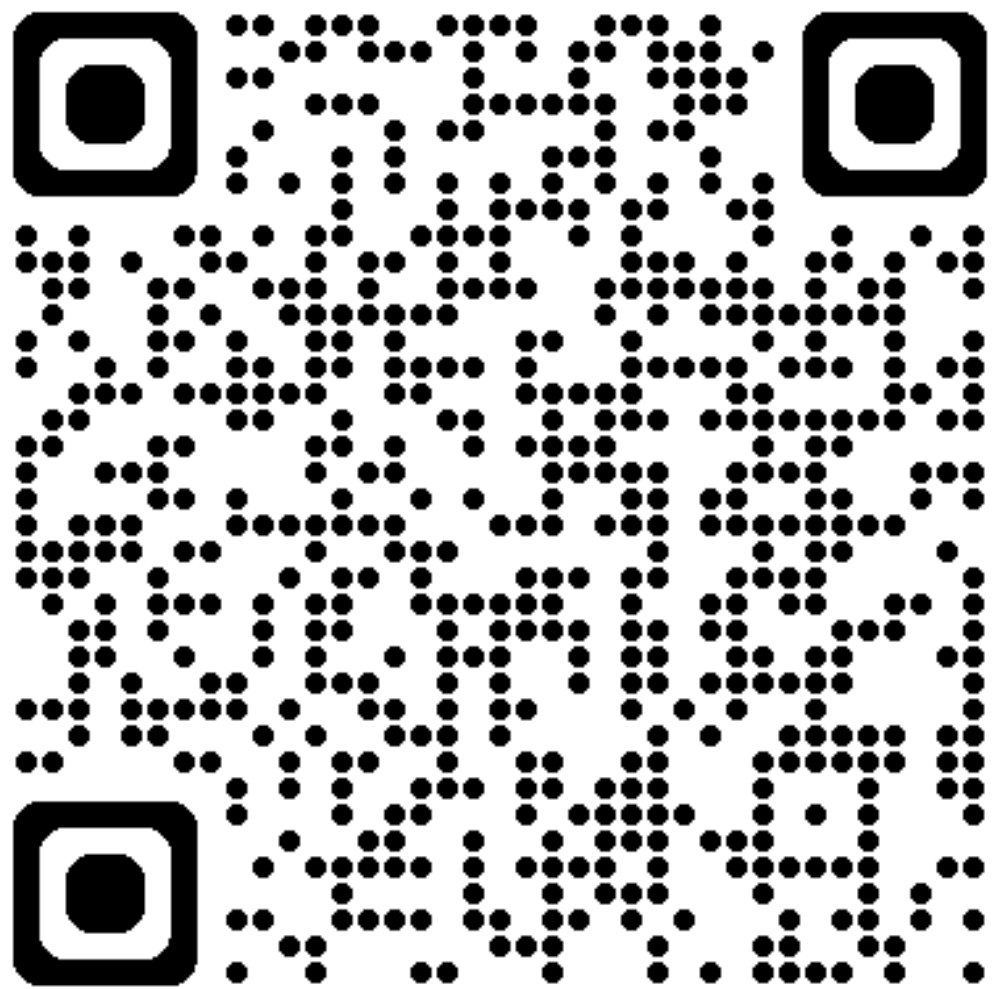
1. Beginning of School Year
2. December/January
3. April



Salem CSD



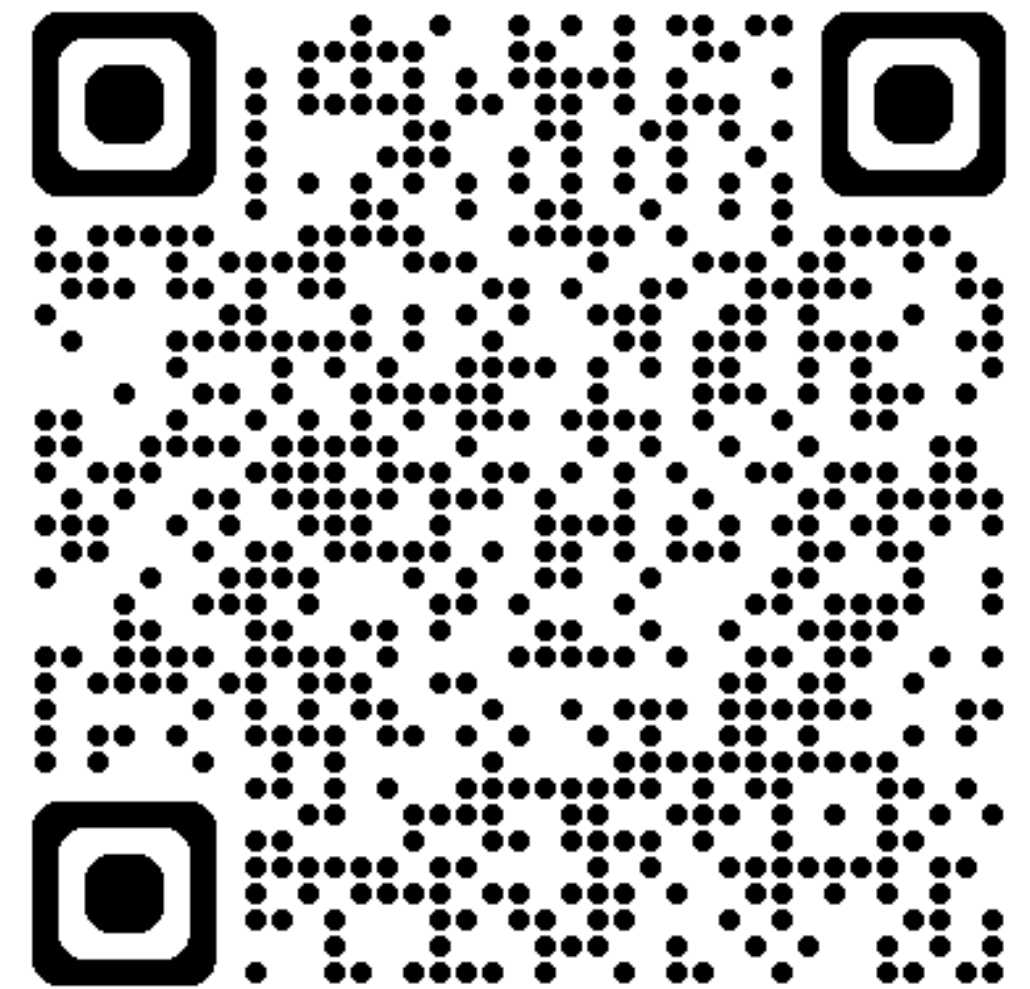
# COMMUNICATION TO FAMILIES



CEP

Public Announcement/Media Release

Parent Letter



P2



# What to Do NOW

## to prepare for Universal Free School Meals

- ✓ Add all programs and buildings
- ✓ Evaluate CEP - maximize - reapply if needed
- ✓ Apply to operate in P2 at remaining buildings



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



**Q: Is Provision 2 a state or federal program?**

**A: Provision 2 (P2) is a federal program under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program that allows schools to provide meals at no charge to all students. In New York State's Universal Free School Meals Program, P2 enables schools to offer free meals while minimizing administrative burdens, such as collecting income applications and determining meal benefits annually. This streamlined approach reduces paperwork while ensuring schools receive federal funding and state subsidies to support meal programs.**





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: Please review counting and claiming for Provision 2 schools

A: **Base Year:**

- Use Benefit Issuance System to Count & Claim Meals by Category (Free, Reduced, and Paid)
- Receive the “free rate” for all meals claimed

**Non-Base Years:**

- Count and Claim total meals served
- Receive the “free rate” for all meals claimed



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** If our entire SFA is currently operating under CEP-Do we need to do anything?

**A:** Yes.

1. Conduct DCMP using April 1 enrollment and establish ISPs for buildings
2. Reapply if necessary to maximize participation in CEP
3. Reapply for any buildings ending their cycle



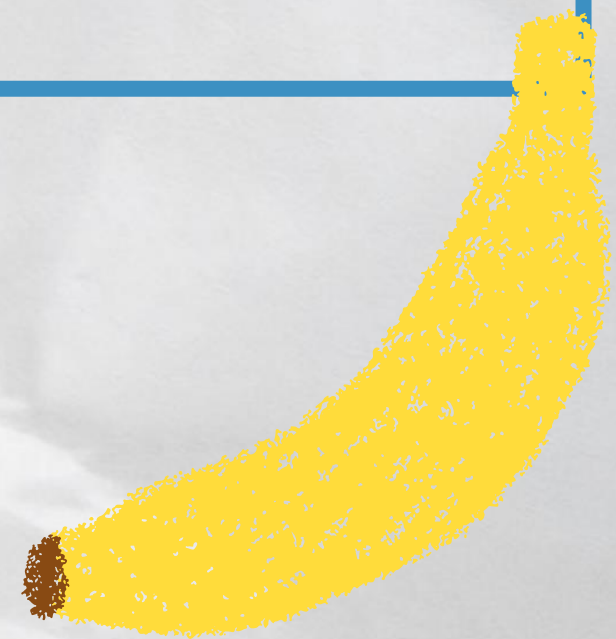
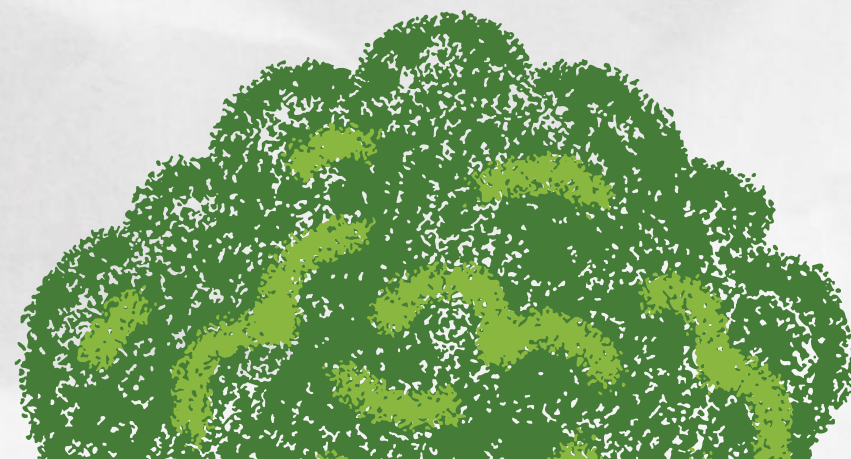
Barker CSD



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** How does this affect private secondary schools who have not been affiliated with the CN Programs ?

**A:** Universal Free Meals is for all school participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast programs. Private secondary schools are eligible to participate if they are not-for-profit and are registered with the NYS Education Department as a school.

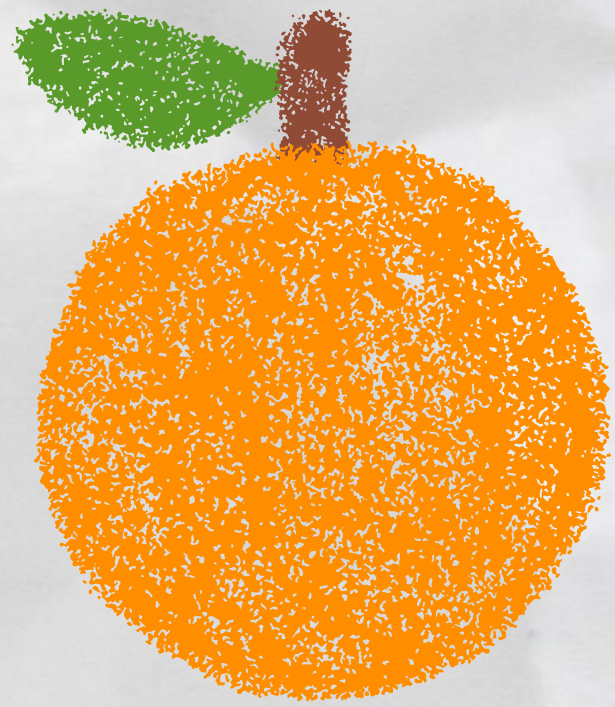




# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** Are all schools required to participate in the federal lunch program?

**A:** The federal programs are optional programs and schools are not required to participate, however, in order for a school to participate in the Universal Free School Meals program they must participate in the federal National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs.





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: How does reimbursement work? Will all meals be reimbursed at the free rate?**

**A: YES. All meals will be reimbursed at the “free rate” of reimbursement.**

Lunch Meal Claim Category	Federal Reimbursement	State Reimbursement	Total Reimbursement
Free	4.54	0.0599	4.5999
Reduced	4.14	0.4599	4.5999
Paid	0.53	4.0699	4.5999



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Are meals required to be served 5 days per week?**

**A: Meals are required to be served when schools is in operation and students are there at meal service times.**



Margerville CSD



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Are students allowed to bring meals from home?**

**A: Yes, students are allowed to bring meals from home unless the school has a local policy that does not allow food from the outside.**



North Warren CSD



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Will SFAs still be required to conduct verification?**

**A: Schools operating in base year of Provision 2 are required to conduct verification of a sample of applications. Information on conducting verification is posted at the beginning of each school year.**



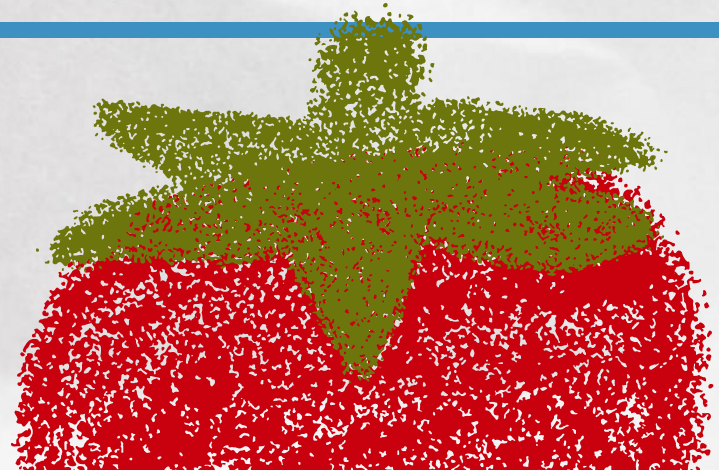
Altmar-Parish-Williamstown CSD



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Are all families required to fill out income applications?**

**A: Eligible families are strongly encouraged to submit free and reduced-price applications; however, families that do not qualify are not required to submit applications. Submission of applications is optional for families. SFAs operating Provision 2 should include the applications in material sent out at the beginning of the school year and as new students enroll throughout the school year. SFAs should have the application readily available for families.**







# THANK YOU

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