Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) urge the members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools to consider two important issues affecting children in our state: the need to expand high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds and the need for school breakfasts to be more accessible to students.

Preschool Expansion

ACNJ urges the Legislature to make good on a promise and begin funding expansion of high-quality, full-day preschool to 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families, as mandated in our state school funding formula.

There are volumes of research and data demonstrating that high-quality preschool can have a dramatic effect on not only the children who participate, but on society as a whole. When children are prepared on their first day of kindergarten, they will experience early successes, and those successes will lead to more successes. When they are not prepared, however, their chances of realizing such successes are greatly diminished.

Research has also shown that quality and duration matter when young children attend programs outside the home. When a preschooler attends an early learning program that is both high-quality and full-day, the lasting effects on his/her development can be significant, particularly if that child is from a low-income family.

By providing children with quality programs that prepare them to be ready for school, we are taking steps to both close our persistent achievement gap and increase equity in our public schools. No new education reform initiative will ever be meaningful if children have not acquired the necessary skills to be successful on their first day of kindergarten and beyond.

This is a very timely topic, as preschool has turned into a national conversation in the last few weeks. This however, is not a new concept in our state. In New Jersey, we have long recognized the importance of preschool especially for low-income families. For nearly 20 years, the state has provided funding to support preschool and the school funding law mandates high-quality, full-day preschool to be fully funded by state dollars for all low-income children.
While New Jersey has led the nation in providing high quality preschool to low-income children, thousands of children are still denied this early education because of where they live. It is time to make good on the promise of preschool.

To measure the need and the will to expand preschool to all eligible children, ACNJ surveyed the 100 districts that currently receive limited preschool state aid. The majority of these districts have high concentrations of children living in low-income families. These children would most benefit from full-day, high-quality preschool. Administrators in 46 of these districts completed the survey.

There were four key survey findings:

1. **The districts are ready and willing to expand their preschools so that more children can benefit.** Approximately 82% surveyed said they had a strong interest in expansion. When asked why they were interested in expanding their programs, nearly all the respondents said that expansion would better prepare their students for kindergarten. Moreover, 75% said that preschool would help children develop critical social and emotional skills at an earlier age.

2. **Parents want their children participating in preschool.** 85% of the respondents said that parent demand for preschool is very high. More than 41% of those surveyed stated that their district had a waiting list for 4-year-olds.

3. **The lack of funding is the barrier for providing preschool.** Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated that what is missing is the additional support promised in the funding formula. They further stated that they cannot meet the needs of young children without adequate state funding. The responses stated that:
   - About half are unable to serve all their 4-year-olds
   - More than 41% have a waiting list for their 4-year-olds
   - More than 68% provide only ½ day preschool for their 4-year-olds
   - Only 1/3 offer preschool to their 3-year-olds

4. **Districts are committed to provide preschool.** Approximately 70% of the responses indicated that they were using local funds to supplement their state funds for preschool. However, with rising district costs, and the existing spending cap, local funds were inadequate to provide full access and quality to all eligible preschoolers.

Besides the survey, ACNJ also assessed whether full-day, high quality preschool was having a positive effect on children in the four districts, Fairfield, Little Egg Harbor, Red Bank and Woodbine, that have received state expansion funds since the funding formula became law. All four districts have high concentrations of low-income children.
ACNJ interviewed administrators in these districts and the overarching message was the same: *preschool was making a huge difference in the lives of their students.*

All four districts identified the following benefits for expanding preschool:

1. **Children are better prepared for kindergarten.** All four districts said that before preschool, most of their students were entering kindergarten without the necessary skills to be successful, particularly in language and reading. They all said that starting earlier—at 3 years-old is making a measurable difference in preparing children to be ready on their first day of school.

2. **Fewer children are requiring special education.** They also saw the link between preschool and a reduction in the number of children requiring special education. For example, before preschool was implemented in Little Egg Harbor the kindergarten referral rate for special education was approximately 11%. In 2011-12, the referral rate was less than 3%, clearly indicating that having the ability to address children's issues earlier, is not only benefiting students but is a cost-saving measure for districts. Similarly, Red Bank acknowledged that when they looked at their special education numbers, they now know they are identifying the right children and they are getting the services they need.

3. **Children's social and emotional skills are better developed.** The result of strengthening these critical skills at an earlier age has meant that all four districts are currently seeing fewer behavioral problems in their kindergarten classes. This was a much bigger kindergarten issue prior to the implementation of preschool.

4. **More opportunities for professional development have raised overall quality.** The support has also increased the opportunities for teachers to hone their skills in teaching young children. In Fairfield, these increased opportunities for professional development have allowed staff to think more broadly about early learning and have provided them with collaborative opportunities they did not have in the past.

While the research on the benefits of preschool remains indisputable, the information collected by ACNJ confirms that the benefits, the demand, and the need for preschool require New Jersey to keep its promise to young children. ACNJ urges the legislature to make a down-payment to expand access to preschool for low-income children.

Fortunately, there is already a base to build-upon. By supplementing existing state support for districts that already have half-day preschool, more children can reap the benefits enjoyed by those 3- and 4-year olds currently attending high quality, full-day PK.

By providing an additional $10 million in preschool aid, the state can maximize its existing commitment to preschool in several different ways:

- Expand existing preschools from half- to full-day for nearly 1500 youngsters
- Provide full-day PK for nearly 800 children who currently do not attend h-q PK
- Provide preschool through a combination of these two options

In NJ, we have long recognized the importance of preschool especially for children from low-income families. We understand that dollars are tight. By investing in a strong educational foundation for young children, however, we are ensuring more proficient readers in 3rd grade and eventually more students leaving our schools with the skills necessary to compete in the 21st century.

Making this investment pays enormous dividends for children, families, communities and taxpayers. As budget discussions move forward, ACNJ urges you to view this down-payment as a critical investment in our children's education—one we can no longer afford to delay.

School Breakfast

Research shows that when students have eaten a good breakfast it is a "win-win" situation for both them and their schools. In general, students who have had breakfast perform better academically and have fewer visits to the school nurse. Schools experience less disruptive student behavior and increased attendance and reduced tardiness.

While nearly all school districts have a school breakfast program when they have 20% or more of their students eligible for free- and reduced-lunch, only 41% of those who are eligible actually take advantage of the breakfast, placing New Jersey a dismal 46th out of 51, according to the Food Research and Action Center's 2011-2012 School Breakfast Scorecard.

The main barrier is that many schools only offer breakfast before school starts and thus not addressing the realities of family life. Bus and family schedules often prevent children from arriving at school with enough time to eat breakfast before that first school bell, leaving many with having nothing to eat before they begin their school day. With nearly one in three New Jersey children living in families that earn too little to meet their basic needs (2010 data), ensuring that every eligible child has access to breakfast is more important than ever.

For the past few years, ACNJ and its partners in the NJ Food For Thought School Breakfast Campaign have worked to ensure that more children are eating a healthy breakfast at school. The Campaign's goal is to boost participation in the federal School Breakfast Program by 30 percent by June 2013. If achieved, about 40,000 more children will get a healthy breakfast each school day.

The steering committee is working to build statewide support for school breakfast expansion, as well as assisting local efforts to expand school breakfast participation. Since the Campaign began, there has been good news, as the state saw a 21% increase in the number of children from low-income families receiving breakfast at school during the period between October 2010 and March 2012.
Although there remains plenty of work to be done, part of the reason for this increase is because schools are beginning to think differently on how best to have more students participating in their breakfast program. Districts are finding that serving “breakfast after the bell” is a more effective way of ensuring that children get a healthy meal at the start of every school day.

For example, providing breakfast in the classroom often dramatically increases student participation in the breakfast program. Typically, food services staff members pack meals into insulated containers for each classroom and deliver them before the first bell rings. Students come into their classroom, grab their meal and sit down and eat. Normally, this is the time that attendance is being taken, announcements are made and desk work is taking place. When the students have completed their breakfast, they dispose their trash for the custodial staff to remove.

Districts with high concentrations of eligible children are usually able to cover the full cost of providing breakfast to more students because of the increase of federal meal reimbursement rates and the relative stability of program operating costs.

In order to learn how well individual school districts are doing in providing school breakfasts, ACNJ urges the legislators to review the district participation data in the September 2012 Food For Thought: Expanding School Breakfast to NJ Students. If particular schools in legislators’ legislative districts have high concentrations of eligible children and low participation rates, ACNJ urges legislators to contact these districts and advocate for increased participation.
The CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program provides federal reimbursement to afterschool enrichment programs serving snack or supper to students in low-income communities.

To qualify for these funds, the food served must meet strict nutritional requirements and meal patterns. Studies show that students consuming healthy foods in school actually replace junk foods in their diet – leading to an overall reduction in fat, calories, and added sugars.

The At-Risk Meal Program addresses both hunger and nutrition issues facing NJ’s youth.
- Nearly 1 in 3 youth aged 10-17 are overweight or obese.
- 17% of low-income children aged 2-5 are obese, the highest rate in the US.
- Over 34% children age 2-5 in are overweight or obese across all income levels.

11.5% of households in NJ experience food hardship, meaning households have to choose between buying food or meeting other basic needs, such as medical expenses or rent.
- Over 50% of the children enrolled in afterschool programs in NJ qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

The At-Risk Meal Program provides participating afterschool programs with a reimbursement of $0.78 per child per day for snacks and $2.86 per child per day for meals. Eligibility is determined using the National School Lunch Program data from neighboring schools. All children attending an afterschool program in an eligible area claim the full rate of reimbursement.

The program is only in its second year in NJ, but growth has been slow. Only 7% of students in eligible communities receive supper through the program. Utilization has increased by a fraction of a percent this year. Statewide, suppers served through the At-Risk Meal Program currently bring in over $13 million per year. If all programs in eligible communities enrolled and served suppers, this program could bring an additional $175 million each year.

NJSACC’s At-Risk Meal Program page has a number of resources on the program. Please visit our webpage for a program overview, handbook, profiles on successful programs, an eligibility map, and other resources to help afterschool programs get started. http://www.njsacc.org/providers/atRiskMealsProgram.php
Joint Committee on the Public Schools
New Jersey State Legislature
Testimony on the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program
February 27, 2013

By Kate A. Sims, MSW
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ksims@frac.org

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
www.frac.org
Fact Sheet: 
The Afterschool Meal Program

Program Overview

- The Afterschool Meal Program offered through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides federal funding to afterschool programs operating in a low-income area to serve meals and snacks to children 18 and under after school, on weekends, and during school holidays. Extended-day schools that run for an additional hour or more also may be eligible. Youth who turn 19 during the school year remain eligible until the end of the school year.

- Local government agencies, school districts and private nonprofit organizations can sponsor afterschool meal sites, which may be located at schools, recreation centers, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other locations where afterschool programs are offered to children.

- In order to participate, an afterschool program must operate in a low-income area where 50 percent of the children in the local elementary, middle or high school qualify for free or reduced price meals; offer educational or enrichment activities; and meet state and local health and safety standards or when required, be licensed for child care.

- Children receiving meals and snacks from participating afterschool programs can be either drop-in or enrolled. Meal counts and corresponding attendance records must be maintained for each day of operation in order to be reimbursed for all meals and snacks served.

- Reimbursable meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards. The meal can be served at any point during the afterschool program. Even though the meal is often referred to as supper, programs that operate on weekends and school holidays can choose to serve breakfast or lunch instead. Programs can receive funding for a maximum of one meal and one snack per day.

CACFP Plays an Important Role in Communities

- When the school bell rings, millions of low-income children do not know where their next meal will come from. The breakfast and lunch they receive during the school day may be their only access to nutritious meals until the following day, after the weekend, or after a school holiday break.

- CACFP fills this gap by providing free meals and snacks to children who might otherwise go hungry.

- The Afterschool Meal Program is an exciting new opportunity to financially support local after school programs and attract more students to activities that help them learn and stay safe when school is out.

Afterschool Meals Benefit Low-Income Children and Families

- CACFP contributes to the healthy growth and development of low-income children by providing them with nutritious snacks and meals when school is out so they are better able to learn during the school day.

- Afterschool meal programs are required to offer educational or enrichment activities in addition to meals, which enables children to learn and stay safe when school is out. The meals served through CACFP draw

Prepared by the Food Research and Action Center
http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/
children to these activities.

- Afterschool meals help parents stretch their food dollars at home during the school year.

**It Pays to Serve Afterschool Meals**

- Participating afterschool programs are reimbursed for each meal they serve, which means the funding increases as the program grows.

- For the 2012-2013 school year, CACFP sponsors receive $1.55 for each breakfast served, $2.86 per lunch or dinner served, and $0.78 per snack. CACFP sponsors can additionally choose to receive the value of commodities (or cash in lieu of commodities), $0.2275 for July 2012 through June 2013, for each lunch and dinner served, which would total about $3.08 per lunch or dinner served.

- Afterschool nutrition funding can add up. For example, an afterschool program serving a meal to 50 children 180 school days a year would receive approximately $25,740 in federal funding through the CACFP without the value of commodities and approximately $27,720 with the value of commodities.

- Serving a snack in addition to the meal would generate an additional $7,020 per year, which would total $32,760 without the value of commodities and $34,740 with the value of commodities.

- Programs that currently provide meals and snacks but have not received federal funding through CACFP can be reimbursed and use the money previously spent on food to serve additional children, offer more activities or hire additional staff.

**USDA Guidance Makes the Program Easier to Operate**

- States can create a simplified School Food Authority (SFA) application process for school districts that already participate in the School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, schools and sponsors whose meals are prepared by a school nutrition department can use “OVS” in the Afterschool Meal Program. OVS allows schools and sponsors receiving their meals from schools to offer all of the meal components, but students do not have to take all of the items. This can lower plate waste and food costs. OVS cannot be used for snacks.

- States can tailor their CACFP application and training specifically to the Afterschool Meal Program.

- Participating afterschool programs have some options to reduce paperwork, including not requiring a management plan if it is a single site program; tailoring the budgetary level of detail to the size and scope of the applicant; and not requiring production records.

**Get Started**

- Afterschool meals provide nutritious food to hungry children when the school bell rings. To get started, contact the state child nutrition agency at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm.

- The state agency can provide potential sponsors with more information about the program, an application and inform them when the next CACFP Afterschool Meal Program training takes place.

Prepared by the Food Research and Action Center
http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/
**Case Example: Maryland**

### Maryland Afterschool Meals Annual Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Children Participating Daily</th>
<th>Afterschool Meal Sites*</th>
<th>Total Meals Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>3,404</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>387,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>8,959</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1,509,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>11,433</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>1,978,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of sites claiming meal reimbursement

### Top 5 Jurisdictions - By Growth in Children Participating Daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th># Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>4,978</td>
<td>3,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George's</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>2,004</td>
<td>1,523</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>1,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Maryland’s Federal Afterschool Meals Program Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2010 ($2.68 per meal)</th>
<th>2010-2011 ($2.72 per meal)</th>
<th>2011-2012 ($2.77 per meal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Meals</td>
<td>$1,115,226.88</td>
<td>$4,411,163.05</td>
<td>$5,920,056.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal $</td>
<td>387,905</td>
<td>1,509,380</td>
<td>1,978,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Afterschool Meals Program - Growth and Site Opportunity - 3 Year State Level Snapshot**

- Sponsors
- Sites
- Area Eligible Schools
SCHOOL SPONSORS (MD):

- **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):** For the school year of 2011-2012, the Division of Food and Nutrition Services of MCPS provided 182,106 suppers to students at 36 locations and 200,031 afterschool snacks to students at 56 locations. The number of children served per site ranged from 5-300. MCPS sponsors afterschool programs both at schools and in the community. Kitchen facilities that meet state and local health and safety standards to produce school meals provided through the National School Lunch Program are able, in the state of Maryland, to produce additional meals and snacks to be served for an afterschool program located on site or nearby. Food service workers of participating schools are able to extend their hours and are paid overtime to prepare the meals, serve the meals, and maintain the daily meal count records for that school's afterschool program. Some schools may also be assigned to prepare the meals and snacks for the nearby community-based sites. In this instance, afterschool program providers of the community-based sites will pick up the meals and snacks for their program at the nearby school to store and serve at the site itself until it is served. The afterschool program providers are trained by MCPS on program requirements and site responsibilities for handing out the meals and maintaining the meal count and attendance records. They will also be responsible for reporting the number of children in attendance each day to the food service workers of their assigned certified kitchen producing the meals and snacks for their program. Site supervisors on staff at MCPS are responsible for overseeing both the school and community-based sites located in their assigned region of the county.

- **Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS):** For the 2012-2013 school year AACPS is sponsoring 11 afterschool meal sites, serving a total of 1,275 students an estimated 80,000 suppers. AACPS began its sponsorship of the Afterschool Meal Program during the 2011-2012 school year serving a total of 42,374 suppers. AACPS partners with county and community agencies to identify where the need for afterschool meal sites exists and where low-income children are naturally congregating. AACPS prepares all of the meals and snacks for the Afterschool Meal Program in one central school kitchen and then distributes the food to all of its sites based on daily participation numbers. AACPS believes that as a school system they have several advantages to bringing this vital nutrition program to the communities they serve during the regular school day. They know the children and the programming offered throughout the communities they serve, and they have an established expertise with the storage and distribution of snacks and meals because of their work with the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, they have experience in providing nutrition education in conjunction with the meal service and are able to cover any upfront operational costs. AACPS reports that the program financially pays for itself. AACPS sees the operation of the Afterschool Meal Program as a tremendous opportunity to extend their work of supporting the nutritional and educational needs of their students beyond the regular school day.
NON-SCHOOL SPONSORS (MD):

Family League of Baltimore City Inc. – Maryland
Providing Meals to More than 100 Afterschool Programs

Afterschool Meal Challenges

Many small afterschool programs do not have the administrative capacity to operate the Afterschool Meal Program. Afterschool programs may need to cover their meal costs prior to receiving their reimbursement, and small programs that operate on a shoestring budget may have trouble “fronting” the funds. Other programs may not have a kitchen or food service experience and have difficulty getting a vendor to prepare and deliver a relatively small number of meals at an affordable price.

Successful Practices

One way to overcome these barriers is for a larger organization to sponsor Afterschool Meals for multiple afterschool programs in the community. The Family League of Baltimore takes on this role for more than one hundred afterschool programs in Maryland, making healthy nutritious after school meals a reality for 7,000 children and teens.

- The Family League assists afterschool programs with the process of becoming sites, such as meeting the health and safety requirements.
- As a sponsor, Family League trains the afterschool program staff to run a safe and effective meal program and to manage the site paperwork, such as the meal count. The training is offered every six months.
- The Family League secured the contract with a food vendor, Business Food Solutions, which offers nutritious meals to all participating programs.
- The vendor delivers the meals to organizations each day.
- The Family League manages the lion’s share of the paperwork and administrative responsibilities for the afterschool programs.

Positive Outcomes

- The Family League’s sponsorship of the Afterschool Meal Program allows the afterschool programs to focus on programming.
- Since the Family League started providing meals, there has been an increase in children and teens participating in the afterschool programs they serve.

The Family League of Baltimore City, Inc. is a quasi-governmental nonprofit organization that works with a range of partners to develop and implement initiatives that improve the well-being of Baltimore’s children, youth and families.
Streamlining the Administrative Requirements for Schools

Operating the Afterschool Meal Program

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA)’s recent guidance on streamlining the requirements for school food authorities (SFAs) that operate the Afterschool Meal Program creates an exciting opportunity to increase the number of schools participating in the Afterschool Meal Program, expanding children’s access to the nutritious afterschool meals they need. Because states are not required to implement many of the streamlining provisions outlined in the guidance, it is crucial that anti-hunger, afterschool, and child advocates encourage their state agencies to adopt the new options. In addition, once states have streamlined the requirements for schools, highlighting the reduction in administrative work can help recruit SFAs to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program. Below are the highlights of the guidance that advocates should be encouraging states to adopt or verifying that states already have implemented.

Agreements

The new guidance re-emphasizes the requirement that state agencies operating both the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) have a single agreement with SFAs operating more than one child nutrition program and that the SFAs should only be required to complete an addendum to their existing agreement to operate NSLP.

Applications

A streamlined application eliminates the redundancy of filling out two applications that each asks for much of the same information. This helps increase the likelihood that a school district will be willing to fill out the application and can reduce the amount of time it takes for an SFA to complete the application, so children do not have to wait as long to receive afterschool meals. The new guidance allows states to:

- Accept a copy of an SFA’s NSLP application, instead of requiring it to submit a CACFP application, and to collect the additional information required specifically for CACFP through an addendum to the SFA’s NSLP application;
- Consider the successful operation of NSLP as proof of administrative capability and financial viability; and
- Waive the requirement that SFAs submit a separate management plan.

In addition, the guidance states that SFAs are not required to submit a separate CACFP budget.

Training

SFAs are experienced in operating federal child nutrition programs, reducing the need for and type of training SFAs require in order to successfully operate the Afterschool Meal Program. The new guidance states that:

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Phone: 202.986.2200 • Fax: 202.986.2525 • Website: www.frac.org
- SFAs are not required to attend training prior to submitting their application to operate the Afterschool Meal Program, nor are members of the food service staff required to attend separate CACFP training on meal services; and
- SFAs are not required to conduct preapproval visits of schools already participating in NSLP.

It also suggests that states offer Afterschool Meal Program training during the regular NSLP training to eliminate the need for SFAs to attend multiple trainings.

**Meal Patterns**

In order to eliminate the challenge of using multiple meal patterns to develop menus, schools have the option of using either the CACFP or the new NSLP meal patterns when serving afterschool meals and can use Offer vs. Serve (OVS) for afterschool meals (OVS is not an option for afterschool snack).

**Procurement and Contracting Requirements**

The new guidance takes a number of steps to make it easier for SFAs to manage the operations of multiple programs. It allows:

- SFAs to follow the NSLP procurement standards instead of CACFP procurement standards;
- SFAs do not have to store food for one or more of the Child Nutrition Programs separately;
- SFAs are not required to allocate expenses to specific Child Nutrition Programs; and
- SFAs may follow NSLP requirements for contracting with food serve management companies instead of CACFP requirements.

**Monitoring**

State agencies must combine the monitoring requirements of financial management for SFAs participating in both NSLP and CACFP. If the two programs are administered by separate state agencies, the state agencies must choose which of them will monitor the SFAs financial management of both child nutrition programs. It also must combine CACFP and NLSP monitoring of programmatic requirements, including meal pattern compliance, counting, and claiming.

To learn more about the Afterschool Meal Program, visit FRAC’s Afterschool Meals Guide at http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/fracs-afterschool-meals-guide/

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Phone: 202.986.2200 • Fax: 202.986.2525 • Website: www.frac.org
Senate Bill 480

Sponsored by Senator BONAMICI (Preession filed.)

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure as introduced.

Specifies requirements for training provided by Department of Education related to United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. Allows Department of Education to award grants related to program.

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Education for grants and administration of grant program.

Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2011.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to the United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program;

appropciating money; and declaring an emergency.

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. (1) The Department of Education shall provide assistance to school districts, government agencies and community groups to encourage participation in the United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. Assistance must include the provision of training that is easily accessible to all regions of this state and may include web-based training.

(2) In addition to the assistance provided under subsection (1) of this section, the department may award grants to school districts, government agencies and community groups to enable participation in the United States Department of Agriculture's Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. Each grant may not exceed $10,000 and must be used to:

(a) Purchase necessary equipment and services required to provide food service and meet sanitation requirements;

(b) Make any payment necessary to comply with sanitation requirements that may be required prior to approval; and

(c) Fund participant outreach activities and materials.

SECTION 2. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropriated to the Department of Education, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2011, out of the General Fund, the amounts of:

(1) $175,000 for the purpose of providing grants to school districts, government agencies and community groups as described in section 1 of this 2011 Act; and

(2) $75,000 for the administration of the grant program described in section 1 of this 2011 Act.

SECTION 3. This 2011 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2011 Act takes effect July 1, 2011.

NOTE: Matter in boldfaced type in an amended section is new; matter in italic and bracketed is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in boldfaced type.

LC 2865

129x
Paterson Reads, a community collaboration of the Paterson Alliance, with the Paterson Education Fund as convenor, supports Dr. Evans’ call for improved student achievement. Focused specifically on reading on grade level by 3rd grade, Paterson Reads aligns community resources to improve summer learning, increase early learning and improve attendance by reducing chronic absenteeism. Now at the midpoint of our first year, Paterson Reads is pleased to report in its progress and future plans.

**Improving Summer Learning**
During the summer of 2012, Paterson Reads expanded the Paterson Public Library summer reading program, reaching more than 1,200 students with books, reading circles and literacy activities. Thirteen agencies joined the Library’s three branches in providing enhanced reading opportunities using the national Collaborative Summer Library Program with the theme, “Dream Big.”

**Increasing Early Learning**
Paterson Reads is working with New Jersey Reach Out and Read to identify additional Paterson pediatricians and funders to implement “Reach Out and Read.” Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Reach Out and Read” has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. Studies show that parents that get books and literacy counseling from their doctors and nurses are more likely to read to their young children, read to them more often, and provide more books in the home. Low-income children exposed to Reach Out and Read show improvements in language development, a critical component of school readiness.

**Increasing Attendance**
Paterson Reads worked with the Paterson Public Schools to implement Breakfast After the Bell to help increase on time attendance at School 8. We are working to expand the effort to additional schools. Paterson Reads members also serve on the Paterson Public Schools’ Attendance Committee to improve student and staff attendance across the district.

**Future plans:**
- create a pipeline from home day care to pre-k to kindergarten to reach the 30% of Paterson children who do not attend pre-school
- expand the 2013 summer reading program to 2,000 students in more than 20 programs with the theme “Dig into Reading”
- extend the reading program year round using the Collaborative Summer Library Program materials
Paterson Reads is one of 124 communities from 34 states representing 350 school districts of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading working to get more kids reading well by the end of third grade. The Campaign for Grade Level Reading is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on the most important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

Research shows that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn, and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter in the fourth grade curriculum. Most students who fail to reach this critical milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma. Yet two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient readers, according to national reading assessment data. This disturbing statistic is made even worse by the fact that more than four out of every five low-income students miss this critical milestone.

Although schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve, providing effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day, the Campaign is based on the belief that schools cannot succeed alone. Engaged communities mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and assist parents in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to serve as full partners in the success of their children are needed to assure student success.

Paterson Education Fund stimulates community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all children reach high standards. For over 30 years, PEF has helped educate Paterson community leaders at all levels about the educational needs of Paterson children. Through forums, workshops, partnerships and direct programming, PEF provides access to information and training. As convenor of Paterson Reads, PEF continues to provide leadership to improve literacy in Paterson.

The Paterson Alliance’s mission is to advance the quality of life in the City of Paterson through the creation of community partnerships and collaborations. With more than 60 not-for-profit members spanning the gamut of community services, the Paterson Alliance builds a more vibrant Paterson.

For more information, contact:

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Paterson Alliance, Leah Dade, Executive Director, 973-985-6363, dade.leah@gmail.com

Paterson Public Library, Cindy Czesak, Director, 973-321-1215, Czesak@patersonpl.org
LINKING DATA AND QUALITY:
ELEVATING THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE
IN NEW JERSEY

Introductions

☐ Dr. Sharon Ryan, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers State University

☐ Ana Berdecia, M.Ed., Senior Fellow/Director, Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children, John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy, Thomas Edison State College

☐ Dr. Arlene Martin, Executive Director, Professional Impact NJ at Kean University

☐ Mary Manning-Falzarano, M.S., Clearinghouse Manager, Professional Impact NJ
Who is the Early Childhood Workforce?
National Focus

- Primarily women
- Education ranges from GED and criminal background check to higher education degree
- Many are low income and eligible for subsidies
- Salaries of those in non-public school settings are under-funded and some of the lowest paid of all jobs
- Turnover in some sectors is roughly 1/3 per year
- Demographics of the workforce changes by sector

The Workforce is More Than Teachers

- Program and school leaders
- Infrastructure personnel
Federal Policy Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives

- CCDF/CCDBG: new state plan and reporting requirements put more emphasis on staff qualifications, professional development systems, and workforce data
- Head Start Act of 2007 requires that 50% (nationally) of teachers have BA degree by 2013
- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants include workforce quality through Quality Rating Improvement Systems and higher education systems
- Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 includes loan forgiveness for early childhood professionals (not yet appropriated)

New Jersey Context

- Data gathering on different sectors of the workforce
- Most recent study: Economic Impact Study conducted in 2006
- NJ Council for Young Children has mapped professional development and preparation opportunities available for differing members of the workforce across the state
The Benefits of Data and Workforce Preparation

- Child Care is an economic driver generating $2.55 billion gross receipts—more than scientific research and development, clothing and all farm commodities

-Early Care and Education produces 65,300+ full-time jobs in the state of New Jersey ("Benefits for All." NJ Economic Impact Study, 2006)

Elevating the Early Childhood Workforce

High quality early childhood education that produces ongoing social and academic benefits for New Jersey's youngest children and society depends on a high quality, well-educated early childhood workforce.
The Challenge:

- States set the requirements in child care licensing and public Pre-K—most states have no requirement for any training before working with children in a child care program.
- Professional development often paid for by the individual without assistance from employer.
- Difficulty in accessing and participating in professional development because of a lack of substitutes/release time.
- Trainings often do not count toward credential or degree.
- Educational advancement often does not result in a compensation increase.

PINJ: Building on State Capacity

- Professional Impact NJ (PINJ) receives its funding through the New Jersey Department of Human Services-Division of Family Development (NJDFD). NJ Registry owned by NJDFD.
- Founded in 1998 to create the professional development infrastructure system in early childhood in New Jersey.
- PINJ is designated to provide professional development opportunities for the field of early care and education in NJ.
- $27,000,000 in scholarships were funded by DHS-DFD and distributed by PINJ between 1999-2010 in NJ Early Childhood (Abbott) Scholarship Program.
- Services include: Standards for the Early Childhood Professional, Core Knowledge and Competencies, a Career Lattice, Career Pathways, Credentials, the NJ Registry, Scholarships, Accreditation Facilitation, and ongoing Professional Development Opportunities through a Leadership Institute.
The NJ Registry for Childhood Professionals:
It's All About the Data

- State-of-the-art early care and education workforce management system funded since 2003 by NJDHS-DFD in the amount of $1.9 million.
- Customized tool designed to collect and maintain data needed for workforce management:
  - Participant (People) data (not just teachers)
  - Early Childhood Program (Employer) data (not just child care programs)
  - Approved Instructor Data
  - Other data needed for quality improvement initiatives, including Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)
- Brings recognition and professionalism to the field
- Can inform policymakers about the early childhood and school-age workforce
Implications for the Future

- Participation in the NJ Registry is voluntary for all but those who participate in DFD-funded programs
- We need to take advantage of this opportunity to map, monitor and improve the entire early childhood workforce, cross-sector, over time
- The NJ Registry is essential to the success of QRIS and the improvement of New Jersey’s early childhood workforce, resulting in positive outcomes for children
- The NJ Council and PINJ are committed to moving forward to collect cross-sector, accurate data for policy making and improving the early childhood workforce and New Jersey’s professional development system
- We have the tool, now we need the policy
Implications (Continued)

- Elevating the early childhood workforce requires standards, scholarships, incentives and compensation to educate, credential, mentor and professionally develop those who work in all sectors of the field linking quality initiatives with accurate workforce data.

Source:

Madam Chairwoman and members of the task force, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Sarah Rappoport and I am speaking as a member of Save Our Schools NJ, a nonpartisan grass roots organization with over 9,000 members across the state who believes that all New Jersey children should have access to a high quality public education.

This task force has been charged with evaluating the way New Jersey determines which children are “at risk” because they live in poverty and thus need additional resources to receive a high quality education. In particular, the task force is looking at whether the Free and Reduced lunch program is the best way to measure poverty?

Although Free and Reduced lunch is the national standard for identifying children at risk, the suggestion has been made that ‘wide scale abuse’ exists in the Free and Reduced lunch system and that this abuse is pervasive enough to justify abandoning using Free and Reduced lunch as a measure for New Jersey.

However, this supposed significant abuse is a myth, perpetuated for political reasons, in order to undermine school funding for children living in poverty.

This myth is being fed by a misrepresentation of an audit of the Free and Reduced lunch program that supposedly found that 37 percent of lunch program recipients were ineligible for the program. In reality, that is not at all what the audit found.

First, the audit did not look at the 25 percent of program participants who were automatically eligible for Free or Reduced lunch because their families received food stamps or welfare payments and had been verified through those programs’ very strict standards. ¹ So, that 37 percent figure is really only 28 percent of all the students receiving Free and Reduced lunch.

Second, the audit looked ONLY at 3 percent of the families whose children received Free and Reduced lunch and who are considered “on the margin” of eligibility because their incomes were up to $100 below the income cut off for the program. In other words, if the eligible family income cut off for the program was $12,000 a year, they contacted 3 percent of those families who reported incomes of $11,900 to $12,000, and asked them to prove their income.

If those families actually had income of $12,001, they were found to be ineligible for the program. However, if the families did not respond to a request for additional documents verifying their income, they were also considered to be ineligible for the program. And, the majority of people who were found to be ineligible actually consisted of those who did not respond at all to the letter requesting the additional documents. ²

Why would a family not respond to a request for documents verifying their income? There are so many reasons why that could happen and those reasons are greatly increased when dealing with the very poor.

- Most obviously, the request for information may never have reached the family because they moved several times or lost their home entirely and are shuttling between different relatives or living in a shelter or even in a car; problems that are pervasive among the very poor.
- The mail also could have been delivered to the wrong address or taken by someone else from an insecure mailbox; both issues that are much more frequent in low-income neighborhoods.

² Ibid
• The parents may not speak English or the parents could be illiterate, making it that much harder for them to understand and fill out forms.

• The family could be afraid of having done something wrong inadvertently and have not responded out of fear. Imagine if you are powerless and struggling to survive and find out you are being audited? How many of us would not be concerned, even if we had done nothing wrong?

• The family may not have the paperwork necessary to prove their income. Many very poor people work for cash and have multiple low-paying jobs, some of which do not provide them with the necessary documentation of income. And, if you are moving all the time, financial paperwork often gets lost or misplaced in the process.

• Finally, the Mother and Father could just be too busy trying to keep food on the table and a roof over their children’s heads by working three jobs. How many of us have never missed a bill deadline?

So, the 37 percent we have all heard so much about, which supposedly represents cheating in the Free and Reduced lunch program, is really 28 percent and even that 28 percent actually consists of a tiny sample of a very small group of families right on the edge of qualifying for the program, who mostly failed to send back the necessary forms.

In fact, as Professor Bruce Baker, an expert in school funding, explained, if the Federal audit had instead looked at those families whose income was $100 too high to qualify for the Free and Reduced lunch program, those making $12,000 to $12,100 in our example, it likely would have found that many of them actually qualified for the Free and Reduced lunch program and their children should be receiving the needed meals.³

There is certainly significant anecdotal evidence that the Free and Reduced lunch program actually is being underused by families poor enough to qualify for the program, often because of stigma or fear of revealing information the families prefer to keep private. That means that many children living in poverty are going hungry because they are not able to take advantage of the Free and Reduced lunch program to receive at least two decent meals each day; which may be the only meals they eat.

Unfortunately, the work of this task force could actually make that problem worse by pushing more very poor families not to apply by falsely implying that many of those already in the program are cheating. This would create more stigma and fear around the program. Surely that is not your goal?

In addition, there is not an alternate method to identify at-risk children that can be considered as reliable as the Free and Reduced lunch program.

In the political debate of school funding, we ask that very low-income children not be further victimized through the work of this task force. New Jersey has one of the best public school systems in the country and is a national model in funding its schools fairly by providing the funding necessary for our neediest children.⁴ We should never turn away from that commitment, nor abandon the best national indicator of financial need – the Free and Reduced lunch program.

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Submitted by Cynthia C. Rice, Esq., Senior Policy Analyst, Advocates for Children of New Jersey: