



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**TOM TORLAKSON**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 7, 2013

Dear School and Community Leaders:

**IMPROVING AFTERSCHOOL NUTRITION—HOW AFTERSCHOOL MEALS CAN  
HELP PROVIDE HEALTHY FOOD TO STUDENTS ACROSS THE STATE**

The passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 brought the at-risk afterschool meal component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to California. This new option allows afterschool programs (ASP) in school districts, community organizations, and local agencies such as parks and recreation departments to serve a free and balanced meal to children each day after school.

I urge you to improve the health of your most vulnerable students by serving meals to all children participating in ASPs, whether those programs are operated by school district partners, community-based organizations, or other local agencies.

As an educator, I have been a longtime supporter of student health. Rigorous research confirms the clear connection between health, learning, and attendance. Healthy students are also more likely to be positively engaged in social, community, and extra-curricular activities. The benefits of supporting student health are far reaching. This is why, as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I launched the Team California for Healthy Kids (TCHK) campaign to promote healthy eating and physical activity throughout the day.

Students attending ASPs are often from families that are food insecure; they do not have consistent access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Serving students a healthy meal after school will help ensure that they return to school the next day ready to learn.

Nutritionally, the requirements for afterschool meals are a step above those for afterschool snacks. The meal must include a fruit and/or vegetable, which aligns with the TCHK goal of students eating more fresh produce. Given the more robust requirements, the reimbursement rate for an afterschool meal (\$3.16) is significantly higher than the rate for a snack (\$0.80). School districts can use this extra funding to offer fruits and vegetables and other high-quality, nutritious foods in addition to adding food service staff hours to prepare fresh meals.

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Over the past two years, California has seen a dramatic increase in the number of sites serving afterschool meals. In April 2013, the California Department of Education (CDE) reimbursed 116 sponsoring organizations for more than 2.8 million afterschool meals. Although these numbers are quite impressive, **thousands** of eligible ASPs are still not using the new afterschool meal program to make healthful meals available to hungry students. Why delay? The funding exists to meet this need.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has streamlined the afterschool meal program application and ongoing recordkeeping requirements for school districts so that ASPs across the state—in rural or urban communities and school or community settings—can participate more easily. For specific information on the requirements, please visit the CDE Streamlining At-Risk Afterschool Meals for School Food Authorities Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/mbusdacacfp032013.asp>.

Further details about the meal program are in the USDA's *At-Risk Afterschool Meals Handbook*, which can be downloaded from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Afterschool Programs Web page at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/Afterschool.htm>.

For other resources and materials, please visit the California Afterschool Network's Afterschool Meal Program Web page at <http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/after-school-meal-program>.

If you have any questions about eligibility, the application process or operations, please contact Laurie Pennings, CACFP Unit Manager, by phone at 916-324-7133 or by e-mail at [lpennings@cde.ca.gov](mailto:lpennings@cde.ca.gov).

Join me in supporting student achievement through improved student health by serving a nutritious, balanced meal to students in ASPs. Thank you for doing all you can to ensure that California's children are ready to learn.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

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