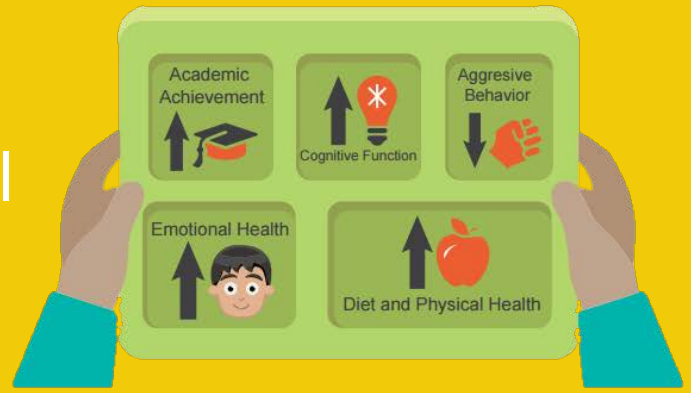


Leverage ESSA to support the nutritional needs of students



Healthy and well-nourished children are more likely to attend class, be ready to learn, stay engaged, and achieve their full academic potential.*

January 11, 2017

Dr. Michael Kirst
President, State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Item 04, California's State Plan for ESSA

Dear Dr. Kirst and Members of the State Board of Education:

The California Department of Education (CDE) is seeking input on elements of California's ESSA state plan. We the undersigned believe California's current plan misses a tremendous opportunity to more fully integrate nutrition into education policy and practice. Several policy and funding provisions in ESSA support student wellness and can be leveraged to help meet students' nutritional needs. We urge the State Board of Education to call for the below changes to California's ESSA state plan to help more students access the academic and health benefits of school nutrition programs.

1. Revise Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to: (1) reflect the existing partnership between CDE and the Department of Health Care Services to directly certify students as eligible for school meals with SNAP and Medicaid data; (2) include language that CDE will employ USDA-endorsed best practices around direct certification;
2. Specify within California's ESSA state plan that Title IV Part A funds can be used for actions that increase access to healthy food and to safe and appealing drinking water;
3. Specify within California's ESSA state plan that Title II Part A funds for professional development can be used to train school personnel on nutrition and wellness;
4. Ensure that nutrition strategies linked through research to improvements in academic achievement such as providing breakfast after the bell are included in the State's plan to provide comprehensive, targeted support to California's lowest performing schools.

*To access an overview of the research visit: <http://cfpa.net/nutrition-and-education-policy>

We thank you for your leadership and urge you to call for revisions to California's ESSA State Plan to help more students access the academic and health benefits of school nutrition:

California Food Policy Advocates