

# **School's Out...Who Ate?**

A Report on Summer Nutrition in California

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Matthew Sharp  
Tia Shimada



## **Acknowledgments**

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## Executive Summary

California Food Policy Advocates' annual report, *School's Out...Who Ate?*, tracks progress and trends in summer nutrition for low-income children in California. The major finding is that in July 2010, 15 percent fewer children benefited from nutritious, federally funded lunches than in July 2009; nearly 25 percent fewer than in July 2008; and a full 50 percent fewer than in July 2002. Significant declines in the availability of summer school, due to state budget cuts, explain much of the reduced participation.

Legislators recognize that summer school cuts eliminate valuable opportunities for academic enrichment, but few policymakers consider the nutritional impact of summer school reductions. The summer nutrition gap jeopardizes the health and academic success of the 2 million low-income students in California who ate a free or reduced price school lunch during the academic year but did not benefit from the federal summer nutrition programs.

More work is needed at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure all eligible children have access to healthy, affordable meals when school is out. Highlights of this report's recommendations are listed below:

- State Superintendent Torlakson should convene a summer learning summit to develop legislative, policy and fiscal solutions to the summer learning (and nutrition) gap.
- The Legislature and Governor should enact SB 429 (DeSaulnier) to provide school districts with increased flexibility to devote resources to summer programs.
- The Legislature should require the state to collect and track data describing the availability of summer school and summer learning programs.
- Local boards of education should consider the impact of summer school reductions and the transition away from year round, multi-track calendars on students' nutritional needs and take steps to mitigate the consequences, such as clear communication to families about options for free lunch sites.
- Local school food services departments should work with local community leaders and organizations to vend meals and disseminate information to students about available lunch sites.

Following this Executive Summary are a full set of recommendations, data analysis, policy updates, and county-by-county data tables.

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## Introduction

Since 1994, California Food Policy Advocates has released an annual report, *School's Out...Who Ate?*, to examine issues of access, participation, and nutritional quality associated with the federally funded summer nutrition programs in California. Each year the report analyzes data from the previous summers to examine county-level and statewide trends.

California faces another year of shrinking summer school programs. This report focuses on the alarming loss of summer meals served by schools to low-income students in July 2010, as compared to previous summers. The dramatic, downward trend in summer meal access and participation means that children who rely on free or reduced-price school meals during the academic year are at risk of losing access to nutritious, affordable meals during the summer.

Fortunately, there are hopeful signs across the state. This report cites opportunities to increase summer meal participation for 2011 and beyond. This report also identifies opportunities to strengthen the summer nutrition programs through local, state, and federal policy changes.

## The Federal Summer Nutrition Programs

The **National School Lunch Program** (NSLP), the country's oldest child nutrition program, continues to operate in the summer months at year-round schools and summer school sites.

In addition, many schools serve lunch during summer school through the **Seamless Summer Food Option**, a streamlined program developed through a 2001 pilot program in California. The Option allows schools where more than 50 percent of the children are certified eligible for free or reduced-price meals<sup>1</sup> to use the exact same paperwork, recordkeeping, accounting, and claiming procedures that the schools use during the school year to operate the National School Lunch Program. In return, schools must open the cafeteria to children from the surrounding community even if they are not enrolled in summer school. Districts receive the NSLP free reimbursement rate for all meals served.

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<sup>1</sup> Income guidelines for students eligible to receive free, reduced-price, and paid school meals:

- Free meal category: household income at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG)
- Reduced-Price category: household income between 130% and 185% of the FPG
- Paid category: household income above 185% of the FPG

State law requires all schools to serve lunch during summer school sessions that last more than two hours. However, this requirement can be waived if certain fiscal conditions are met.

The **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** was originally designed for children who attend schools with a traditional June through August summer break and who do not participate in summer school. SFSP sponsors receive payments from USDA for serving nutritious meals and snacks to youth, 18 years and younger, at approved sites, such as parks and community centers in low-income areas.<sup>2</sup> Several California school districts operate SFSP because of the program's slightly higher reimbursement rate. Summer Food Service Programs are often offered at community-based sites such as Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, churches, and municipal Parks and Recreation locations.

## Statewide Statistics and Trends

*Please note: county-specific data are available in Appendix A of this report.*

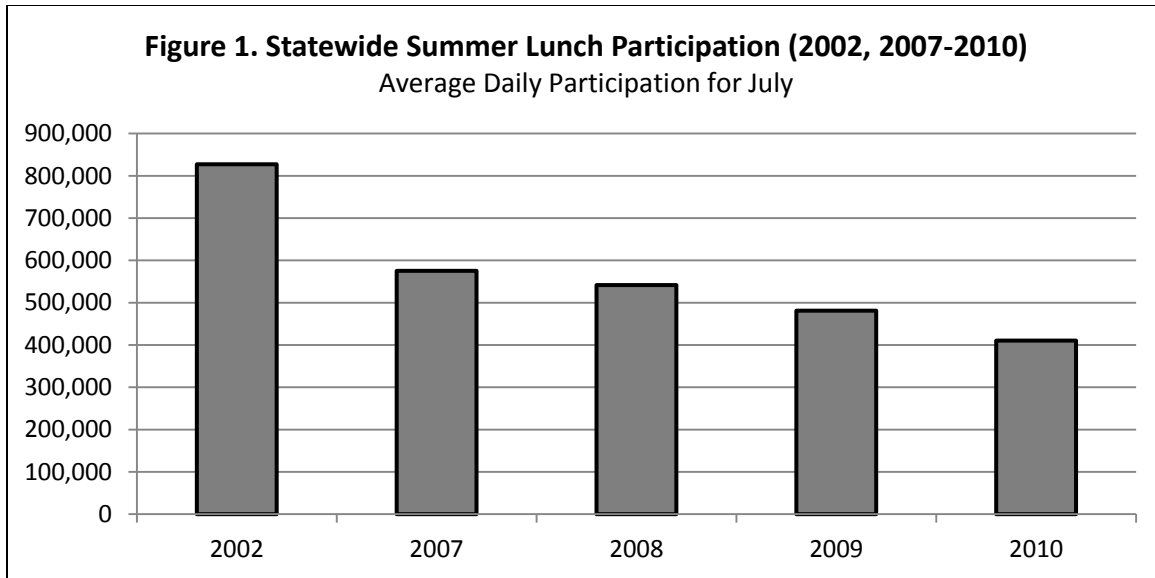
Children need access to nutritious meals that combat hunger, support learning, and help prevent obesity. Unfortunately, when summer vacation begins, the federally funded school meals that benefit low-income children each school day come to a halt. The need for these meals has only increased in recent years as many California families are facing unemployment and other financial hardships that have them struggling to meet their basic needs.

### Decline in Summer Meal Participation

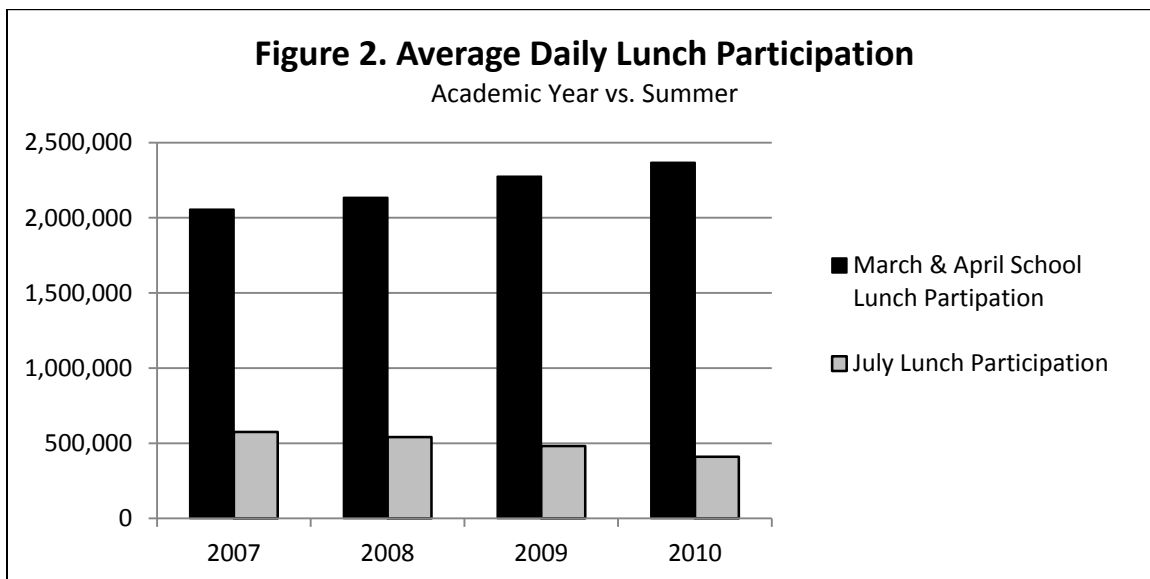
According to data from the California Department of Education (CDE), average daily participation in federally funded summer lunches declined by 15 percent from July 2009 to July 2010; nearly 25 percent from July 2008; and a full 50 percent since 2002 (Figure 1). While 410,000 California children benefitted from free or low-cost lunches served through federal summer nutrition programs in July 2010, this is only 12 percent of the 3.3 million low-income<sup>3</sup> children in the state who are eligible for these programs.

<sup>2</sup>Areas where 50% or more of the children attending local schools are certified as eligible for free or reduced price school meals are classified as "low-income."

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report, "low-income" is synonymous with being eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program.

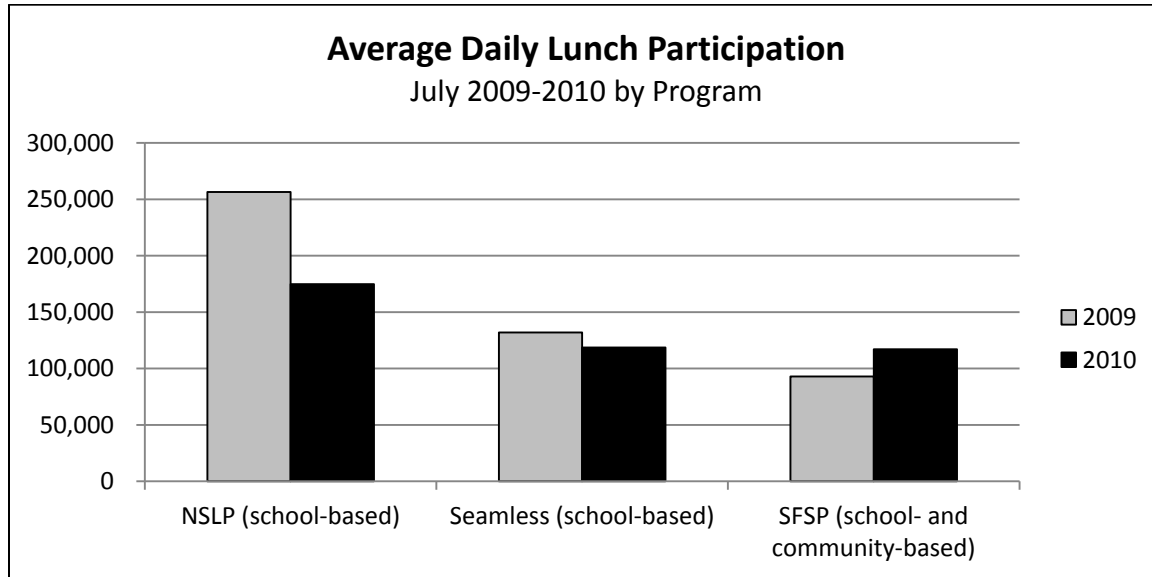


As shown in Figure 2, the number of low-income children served by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the traditional academic year has increased steadily in recent years. This increase in participation, paired with the decline in summer meal participation, has resulted in an alarming gap. As many as 83 percent of California’s low-income children who participate in free or reduced-price school meals during the academic year miss out on affordable, nutritious lunches in the summer months.



The number of children served by the federal Summer Food Service Program increased by over 24,000 or 26 percent from July 2009 to July 2010 (Figure 3). The Summer Food Service Program can operate at community-based sites (e.g. parks, Boys and Girls

Clubs, YMCAs, churches) in addition to school sites. Because over 70 percent of free and low-cost summer lunches in California are served by schools, the increased participation at community-based sites could not bridge the summer nutrition gap for low-income children across the state.



### **The Summer Nutrition Gap and Summer Learning Loss**

The reduction of summer school programming in most California school districts has been widely reported. Reported less often is the fact that summer school losses will have a significant impact on thousands of low-income children who normally benefit from federally funded meals at summer school sites. At the time of publication, statewide data on the scope and scale of summer learning and enrichment opportunities were not available. However, there are data that can help describe the loss of access to federally funded summer meals. Specifically, the number of sites serving meals through the school-based summer nutrition programs (the National School Lunch Program and the Seamless Summer Food Option) fell by over 50 percent from more than 8,500 sites in July 2009 to less than 4,200 in July 2010.

### **Summer Nutrition and Year-Round, Multi-Track Learning**

In addition to the loss of summer school and summer enrichment programming at school sites, a statewide development that likely contributed to the decline in the number of summer lunches served by schools is the move away<sup>4</sup> from year-round,

<sup>4</sup> Two factors driving the move away from year-round, multi-track academic calendars are: (1) statewide and local construction bonds have provided resources to build hundreds of new schools across the state, reducing overcrowding and the need for year-round, multi-track schools; and (2) legislation enacted in 2004 in the wake of the Williams educational equity settlement is slowly phasing out Concept 6 calendars, which provided students twenty fewer (but longer) school days, as part of year-round education.



multi-track academic calendars in California. In 2003, over 1.3 million students, many of them low-income, attended year-round, multi-track schools. For the year-round, multi-track schools that were in session during the summer months, students had regular access to school lunch. In 2010, the number of students attending year-round, multi-track schools decreased to less than 700,000.

The transition from year-round, multi-track schedules to traditional school calendars is intended to support improved academic achievement. Reaching students with summer learning programs and summer enrichment activities, both paired with nutritious summer meals, will help strengthen that support.

## Federal Policy Update

### Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act

In December 2010, President Obama signed into law the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (S.3307), a bill that reauthorized the federal child nutrition programs. The bill makes several important changes that will improve summer nutrition, such as:

- Increasing federal reimbursement for each lunch served through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)<sup>5</sup> by \$0.06 to support improved nutritional quality. Although more funding is needed, this relatively small investment, the first new funding in many years, will help school meal providers serve more appealing, nutritious lunches upon implementation in 2012.
- Requiring higher nutrition standards for lunches served through the National School Lunch Program by 2012.
- Aligning of SFSP eligibility requirements for public and private sponsors.
- Establishing a process for SFSP sponsors to appeal disqualification.
- Allowing permanent operating agreements between SFSP sponsors and the state.
- Requiring school-based sponsors to conduct more vigorous outreach to eligible families.

### Federal Demonstration Projects

The 2010 U.S. Department of Agriculture Appropriations bill included \$85 million for demonstration projects to develop innovative models to meet children and teen's nutritional needs when school is not in session. This action responds to recommendations from many stakeholders, including previous iterations of *School's Out...Who Ate?* The willingness of Congress and the Administration to test creative

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<sup>5</sup> The National School Lunch Program, the country's oldest child nutrition program, usually operates during the school year. Schools can continue to operate NSLP in the summer months at year-round schools and during summer school.

solutions to the summer nutrition problem is a positive sign. While California is not involved in the current demonstration projects, this federal commitment is an opportunity to discover long-term solutions.

### **Administrative Flexibility**

Additionally, USDA released several simplifications that codify flexibility currently utilized by some California sponsors at some sites. These changes are intended to reduce the cost and burden of operating SFSP in California, providing sponsors the fiscal feasibility to maintain, and potentially expand, summer meal service.

The USDA-FNS memos announcing the simplifications are available at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/administration/Policy/SFSP-11-2011.pdf> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/administration/Policy/SFSP-12-2011.pdf>.

## **State Policy Update**

### **Statewide Challenges**

The California State Legislature and the Governor are, once again, poised to enact deep cuts to the state- and federally-funded safety net for nutrition, health care, job training, and education. The provisional 2011-2012 state budget adopted in March reduces state spending by \$11 billion. Whatever the result of the current negotiations over tax extensions and further cuts to state services, it is clear that resources available for public education are shrinking, leading to harmful reductions at school sites across the state.

School districts have shortened the school year and eliminated summer school, afterschool, and enrichment programs – not only jeopardizing basic instructional opportunities, but also eliminating the times and places that students receive nutritious, federally-subsidized meals and snacks. Losing summer school programs undermines student enrichment and academic achievement. Losing summer school meals intensifies that harm.

### **Statewide Opportunities**

Described below are four promising opportunities and ongoing efforts to improve summer nutrition across California:

- 1) State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson has communicated his support for stronger local actions to serve summer meals in a recent correspondence to county superintendents of instruction, as well as to the over-1000 school district superintendents across the state. The Superintendent's letter to promote summer meals is here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr11ltr0421.asp>

- 2) In November of 2010, the State Legislative Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment released its findings and recommendations<sup>6</sup>. The task force outlined a clear path for policymakers and state education leaders to strengthen California's commitment to the summer learning safety net, which is vital to ensuring that children receive nutritious meals when school is not in session.
- 3) SB 429, introduced by Senator DeSaulnier, is intended to provide flexibility to recipients of After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) or 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) funds. This flexibility will allow grantees the flexibility to invest ASES and CCLC resources in summer learning programs.
- 4) Since last year's publication of *School's Out...Who Ate?*, the Summer Meals Coalition has worked to build support for more robust summer nutrition programs in California. CFPA engaged with fellow members of the Coalition to identify potential program simplifications that would increase participation or, at minimum, reduce the operational costs for summer meal sponsors and sites.

The Coalition is working with California Department of Education to ensure all summer meal sponsors are encouraged to utilize the operational flexibility and administrative simplifications that are currently available under summer meal program rules, such as flexibility in establishing designated eating areas; use of simplified daily meal count forms; flexibility in setting meal service times, and waivers for the first-week site visit.

Several of the Coalition's recommended changes, such as the option to adopt the offer vs. serve model for SFSP, were included in the USDA simplifications described earlier in this report.

## Recommendations

### Federal Policy Recommendations

- Congress and the Administration should reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and strengthen 21st Century Community Learners funding in ESEA by explicitly allowing and encouraging the use of these funds for summer programming.

<sup>6</sup> The full findings and recommendation from the State Legislative Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment are available at the Partnership's website: <http://partnerforchildren.org/what-we-do/advocacy-and-policy/legislative-task-force/summer-task-force-documents>.

- USDA should ensure SFSP meals comply with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and strengthen the program's appeal to youth, parents, and caretakers. This process is currently underway with respect to meals served through the National School Lunch Program<sup>7</sup>.
- USDA should further simplify administration and reduce monitoring burdens and costs of operating summer nutrition programs, particularly SFSP, by maximizing use of technology for program transactions, even at the site level.
- USDA should provide greater flexibility for sponsor-site-vendor arrangements to facilitate service of meals and snacks where and when children do *not* readily congregate, such as in remote and desert communities.
- USDA and California Department of Education should use technology to combine the application, monitoring, and claiming features of SFSP and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) so that community sponsors can easily transition to serve children and teens with the newly available Afterschool Meal Program resources when school is in session.

### **State Policy Recommendations**

- State Superintendent Torlakson should convene a summer learning summit to develop legislative, policy, and fiscal solutions to the summer learning and nutrition gap.
- The Legislature and Governor should enact SB 429 (DeSaulnier) to provide school districts with increased flexibility to devote existing resources to summer programs.
- The Legislature should require the state to collect and track data describing the availability of summer school and summer learning programs.
- As soon as the state budget permits, the Legislature and education leaders should provide adequate resources for school districts to offer robust summer programs that offer federally funded summer meals. Summer learning, summer enrichment, and summer nutrition must be a priority to close the achievement gap, combat hunger, and prevent obesity among California students.

### **Local Recommendations**

School boards and school districts should:

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<sup>7</sup> Note: this process is also scheduled to occur for Child and Adult Care Food Program meals in 2012.

- Send information about nearby summer nutrition programs home with all students on the last day of school. If school has already closed for the summer, schools should attempt to contact families through automatic phone messaging systems or other means.
- Seek to preserve summer school programs.
- Ensure that all summer programs operate at school sites that offer federally funded nutrition programs.
- Ensure that school sites open their campuses to serve eligible children from the surrounding neighborhood in addition to students.

School nutrition services departments, municipal recreation programs, food banks, and local advocates should:

- Convene to identify gaps in the availability of summer meal sites and marketing opportunities for existing sites.
- Increase the number of children served at community sites by conducting neighborhood-level outreach and by ensuring that sites welcome participants with open gates, effective signage, and approachable staff.
- Recruit meal vendors and sponsors for new SFSP sites.
- Contact local principals to secure their support for operating open summer school sites that serve meals to children, not just students, in the neighborhoods around their schools.
- Briefly survey drop-in participants and their parents about the appeal of the meal program to identify potential adjustments in menus, service, and environment.

Please note: a list of summer meals sites should be available soon from CDE at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites11.asp>.

## Appendix A

County	March and April 2010: Free and Reduced-Price NSLP <sup>8</sup>	July 2010: Free and Reduced-Price RP NSLP <sup>9</sup>	July 2010: Seamless <sup>10</sup>	July 2010: SFSP <sup>11</sup>	July 2009: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>12</sup>	July 2010: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>13</sup>	2010: % Children Eating FRP Lunch During School Year and Summer <sup>14</sup>	% Change in Total Summer Lunch Participation from 2009 to 2010	2010: Rank for % Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>15</sup>
Alameda	60,021	3,117	8,505	2,985	16144	14,607	24%	-10%	28
Alpine	56	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	14
Amador	1,028	11	0	0	11	11	1%	3%	11
Butte	12,137	321	71	2,181	3057	2,573	21%	-16%	36
Calaveras	2,084	926	0	0	937	926	44%	-1%	20
Colusa	2,409	40	0	0	41	40	2%	-3%	22
Contra Costa	43,847	2,715	8,915	278	13224	11,908	27%	-10%	30
Del Norte	1,566	56	47	0	365	103	7%	-72%	55
Eldorado	5,621	21	218	106	126	345	6%	173%	1
Fresno	95,222	1,221	3,895	7,086	17184	12,202	13%	-29%	47
Glenn	2,801	14	0	0	14	14	0%	4%	9
Humboldt	6,046	172	99	424	937	695	11%	-26%	45
Imperial	15,956	111	744	611	1171	1,466	9%	25%	5
Inyo	365	0	0	35	101	35	10%	-65%	53
Kern	89,662	1,648	5,000	125	6239	6,773	8%	9%	7
Kings	12,794	99	232	857	1156	1,188	9%	3%	10
Lake	4,514	50	690	0	839	740	16%	-12%	32
Lassen	1,261	14	0	0	8	14	1%	79%	3
Los Angeles	656,769	50,475	22,220	68,200	149987	140,895	21%	-6%	24
Madera	16,487	380	1,193	0	771	1,573	10%	104%	2

<sup>8</sup> The average daily participation (ADP) in free and reduced-price meals for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is shown for March and April 2010 (averaged).

<sup>9</sup> ADP in free and reduced-price meals for that National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is shown for July 2010.

<sup>10</sup> ADP in the Seamless Summer Food Option (Seamless) is shown for July 2010.

<sup>11</sup> ADP in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is shown for July 2010.

<sup>12</sup> ADP in all federal summer meal programs (NSLP, Seamless, and SFSP) is shown for July 2009.

<sup>13</sup> ADP in all federal summer meal programs (NSLP, Seamless, and SFSP) is shown for July 2010.

<sup>14</sup> This value is calculated as [ADP in all federal summer meal programs for July 2010] ÷ [ADP in free and reduced-price meals for NSLP during March & April 2010]

<sup>15</sup> A rank of 1 represents the largest percent increase in participation among all 58 counties.

County	March and April 2010: Free and Reduced-Price NSLP <sup>8</sup>	July 2010: Free and Reduced-Price RP NSLP <sup>9</sup>	July 2010: Seamless <sup>10</sup>	July 2010: SFSP <sup>11</sup>	July 2009: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>12</sup>	July 2010: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>13</sup>	2010: % Children Eating FRP Lunch During School Year and Summer <sup>14</sup>	% Change in Total Summer Lunch Participation from 2009 to 2010	2010: Rank for % Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>15</sup>
Marin	5,257	98	564	157	906	819	16%	-10%	29
Mariposa	736	9	0	0	29	9	1%	-69%	54
Mendocino	5,659	46	468	89	734	603	11%	-18%	37
Merced	32,058	2,260	4,037	0	6567	6,297	20%	-4%	23
Modoc	777	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	14
Mono	1,125	0	47	0	0	47	4%	0%	14
Monterey	32,804	1,501	2,476	862	6734	4,839	15%	-28%	46
Napa	6,402	38	175	0	228	213	3%	-6%	25
Nevada	2,194	69	0	0	123	69	3%	-44%	51
Orange	168,736	8,572	13,481	3,368	27303	25,421	15%	-7%	26
Placer	12,356	237	0	368	697	605	5%	-13%	33
Plumas	645	8	0	0	0	8	1%	0%	14
Riverside	180,649	6,171	5,598	3,079	21100	14,848	8%	-30%	49
Sacramento	91,706	7,014	1,251	4,196	18927	12,461	14%	-34%	50
San Benito	4,124	179	556	0	520	735	18%	41%	4
San Bernardino	173,111	11,032	5,177	1,299	23525	17,508	10%	-26%	42
San Diego	171,219	31,657	13,561	1,874	61347	47,092	28%	-23%	40
San Francisco	19,392	334	858	5,535	7868	6,727	35%	-15%	35
San Joaquin	63,790	32,771	1,878	295	38469	34,944	55%	-9%	27
San Luis Obispo	8,839	861	56	33	1065	950	11%	-11%	31
San Mateo	21,590	1,892	595	366	2687	2,853	13%	6%	8
Santa Barbara	26,782	1,695	492	1,504	3662	3,691	14%	1%	12
Santa Clara	70,427	2,087	5,148	1,877	9054	9,112	13%	1%	13
Santa Cruz	12,503	41	1,137	624	6592	1,802	14%	-73%	56
Shasta	11,001	171	600	27	974	798	7%	-18%	38
Sierra	126	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	14
Siskiyou	2,390	17	0	36	62	53	2%	-14%	34
Solano	18,952	394	2,078	0	3508	2,472	13%	-30%	48
Sonoma	21,390	528	600	1,900	2787	3,028	14%	9%	6

County	March and April 2010: Free and Reduced-Price NSLP <sup>8</sup>	July 2010: Free and Reduced-Price RP NSLP <sup>9</sup>	July 2010: Seamless <sup>10</sup>	July 2010: SFSP <sup>11</sup>	July 2009: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>12</sup>	July 2010: Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>13</sup>	2010: % Children Eating FRP Lunch During School Year and Summer <sup>14</sup>	% Change in Total Summer Lunch Participation from 2009 to 2010	2010: Rank for % Total Summer Lunch Participation <sup>15</sup>
Stanislaus	44,600	883	2,253	2,070	6841	5,206	12%	-24%	41
Sutter	8,143	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	14
Tehama	5,670	13	0	0	103	13	0%	-87%	57
Trinity	801	15	20	0	44	35	4%	-21%	39
Tulare	48,830	580	1,511	1,416	6544	3,507	7%	-46%	52
Tuolumne	1,924	0	0	0	106	0	0%	-100%	58
Ventura	42,108	1,647	1,612	2,502	7744	5,761	14%	-26%	43
Yolo	10,952	260	440	571	1709	1,271	12%	-26%	44
Yuba	7,310	255	156	49	467	460	6%	-2%	21
<b>State Totals</b>	<b>2,367,706</b>	<b>174,726</b>	<b>118,654</b>	<b>116,985</b>	<b>481,339</b>	<b>410,365</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>-15%</b>	<b>N/A</b>



California Food Policy Advocates  
Oakland Office  
436 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1220  
Oakland, California 94356  
510.433.1122p  
510.433.1131f  
<http://www.cfpa.net>

California Food Policy Advocates  
Los Angeles Office  
205 S. Broadway Street, Suite 402  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
213.482.8200 p  
213.482.8203 f  
[matt@cfpa.net](mailto:matt@cfpa.net)