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At Least 2,651 Students in Nevada County Missing Out on School Meals

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By: California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA)

OAKLAND, CA, Sept. 9, 2014 – Millions of kids across California are gearing up for the new school year. How can we help them succeed? Research and common sense tell us that well-nourished students are better able to learn, grow, and achieve at their fullest potential. Unfortunately, students across California are going without the nutrition resources they need.

California Food Policy Advocates has released a new analysis of school meal data for California and each of the state's 58 counties. The analysis shows that nearly three in five California public school students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals, but only a fraction of those students are being served.

"All children in California deserve opportunities to learn and grow. We must give students and schools the resources they need to succeed. Ensuring that students can benefit from school lunch and school breakfast every day means we'll have kids who are better focused and ready to achieve," says George Manalo-LeClair, executive director of California Food Policy Advocates.

On an average school day in Nevada County, the National School Lunch Program reaches 57 percent of low-income public school students. An additional 1,373 low-income students could be served a free or reduced-price school lunch. Similarly, 2,651 (or 83 percent) of Nevada County's most vulnerable students miss out on the health and academic benefits of school breakfast. When students miss out on these nutrition resources, schools miss out on federal dollars. Public schools in Nevada County would receive an additional \$383,000 in federal meal reimbursements if their breakfast programs served as many low-income students as their lunch programs.

Local, state, and federal leaders can take immediate action to support student health and academic achievement by increasing the reach of the school meal programs.

- Implement policies and practices to support after-the-bell breakfast service, which dramatically increases student participation.
- Improve the direct certification process, which automatically identifies and enrolls low-income students in the school meal programs.
- Expand the use of existing options such as Provision 2 and the Community Eligibility Provision to offer meals free of charge to all students.
- Invest in school food infrastructure and equipment so that schools can serve healthy, appealing meals.
- Ensure that all students have enough time to eat their meals during the school day.

For the additional resources, including state and county data tables, visit: <http://cfpa.net/school-meal-analysis-2012-13>

California Food Policy Advocates is a statewide policy advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.