

Community Eligibility Provision Page

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is an option of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded School Nutrition Programs administered by the Illinois State Board of Education that makes it easier for schools and districts to provide reimbursable free breakfasts and lunches to 100% of their students.

The meal reimbursement for CEP reflects the percentage of students who are certified for free meals without a paper application (*called "Identified Students"*) because they have been found eligible for other need-based programs. That percentage is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the share of meals that are reimbursed at the "free" rate, with the rest reimbursed at the "paid" rate. For example, a school with 50 percent *Identified Students* would receive 80 percent of its meal reimbursements at the free rate and 20 percent at the paid rate. If the *Identified Student* rate is 62.5% or higher for any given school or group of schools, 100% of the meals are reimbursed at the "free" rate.

A school district can implement CEP in any school or group of schools with 40 percent or more identified students. The identified student percentage remains valid for up to four years, but schools can adjust upwards if they have reason to believe that the identified student percentage has increased.

The Community Eligibility Provision helps you to:

- **Feed more kids** by facilitating the implementation of Breakfast After the Bell alternative models (*Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab 'N' Go, or Second Chance*) which increases student access and participation while giving staff more time to prepare for lunch.
- **Maximize reimbursements, saving your district money**- Schools above 62.5% direct certification have 100% of meals reimbursed at the free rate.
- **Streamline nutrition program administration** - Schools no longer need to collect and process school meal applications. Schools no longer need to collect meal payments from students or follow-up with families on unpaid meal charges.

The [USDA's](#) CEP Estimator Tool under "*Is CEP viable for your school?*" can help compare the estimated Federal reimbursement under CEP and assesses different groupings to optimize the Federal reimbursement. [ISBE](#) has an Illinois specific tool to evaluate CEP as well under "*Evaluation Worksheets*".