



## How Community Eligibility Works

With community eligibility, enrolled schools can serve breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students. To qualify for enrollment, at least 40 percent of students in a given school must be identified as vulnerable due to participation in a social programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps). It is even better than traditional free and reduced-price lunch programs because:

- Schools that adopt the program no longer have to spend time processing meal applications or tracking eligibility of students. Instead, they simply report the total number of school breakfasts and lunches served.
- Teachers are no longer responsible for collecting lunch money, which reduces stress for kids and teachers alike.
- The program is flexible, allowing school districts to enroll groups of schools, individual schools, or an entire district. Once enrolled, schools' eligibility is guaranteed for four years.

Nationwide, community eligibility served 6.6 million children in more than 14,000 schools last year. But only about half of the schools that are eligible to take advantage of this powerful tool to feed children participated. So many more hungry students could benefit. Some school districts in Washington state have already taken advantage of this provision, recognizing the role community eligibility can play in creating a better life for kids, both in school and at home.

School districts in our state that have enrolled with the largest student populations include:

- The entire **Yakima School District**, where more than 15,000 students can now receive free breakfast and lunch at school;
- All schools in the **Sunnyside School District**, impacting more than 6,000 students;
- Eleven schools in the **Franklin Pierce School District**, improving access to nutritious meals for just over 5,000 students;
- All schools in the **Toppenish School District**, helping to ensure more than 3,800 students don't go to school hungry.

*For more information about Community Eligibility in Washington, contact Linda Stone, Food Policy Director with the Children's Alliance.*