

STATE OF ALASKA

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

Department of Education & Early Development

Office of the Commissioner

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February 14, 2011

The Honorable Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Room 532
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senators Stedman and Hoffman:

This letter includes responses to follow-up questions asked during the Senate Finance Committee hearing on Monday, February 7, 2011, related to SB3, “An Act providing for funding for school lunch and breakfast.”

- ***Is 35% of the food offered through NSLP wasted by the students at the table?***

Child Nutrition Staff review between 15 to 20 district meal programs per year. Direct observation by the review staff has never observed this level of waste. If students do not care for a particular food component they may discard a portion of the meal. When schools serve a meal students do not care for, the school lunch staff remedies the problem.

A sampling of districts garnered the following varied responses:

“It is difficult to measure waste; the hot entrées seldom get thrown out, and when it is it’s because the student didn’t have time to finish it; mainly the cold items like fruits and veggies tend to get thrown out more often.”

“Custodial and other food service staff over the last couple of years tell me that the amount thrown out continues to decrease as offer vs. serve was implemented, food service lines speed up, and quality of food improves.”

“We have very little waste due in a large part to our experienced cooks and our stable participation rate.”

“It is difficult for us to document waste since all of our elementary schools eat their lunch in the classroom. Custodians will tell us when a meal isn't popular based upon waste. Most of the time, the kids don't seem to want the fruits and vegetables.”

- *More detailed numbers on student population (compared to the total, how many get reduced-price meals, how many get free meals, how many pay, how many don't eat school meals at all, etc).*

Attachment I provides the free and reduced-price lunch eligibility for each school district and individual school sites participating in the National School Lunch Program. The six districts that do not participate are not on this report. (They are: Aleutian Region, Chugach, Denali, Pelican, Pribilof, and Tanana.) This eligibility information includes the total student enrollment (nearly equal to average daily membership). The last two columns of this report show which sites participate in lunch and which sites participate in breakfast as designated with an “X.”

Attachment II is a recent compilation using actual FY2010 monthly claims and other reports to break out the free, reduced-price and paid participation compared to the total population, by district. This calculation uses NSLP eligibility for total population, which is consistent with the department's enrollment data and average daily membership.

- *Various methods employed by schools to identify students in the free and reduced-price meal program without embarrassing those students.*

Most schools have a student identification card that either scans or has a 4-digit number the school uses to record meals served to students. In the schools where a card is not used, a roster of all students is available for the school lunch staff, who check the student's name to record who received a meal. Both processes only identify the student as enrolled in the school. Authorized school district staff who prepare the monthly meal claims by category have access to the student's eligibility status of Free, Reduced or Paid. Releasing information to unauthorized staff about a student's eligibility is prohibited by federal statute.

- *School revenues from breakfast and lunch programs from students: Total amount of revenue per school and overall AK total for money brought in through paid and reduced-price meals.*

Attachment III provides the annual audited activity from each school district's food service special revenue fund for FY2010 and FY2009. This spreadsheet provides revenues, expenditures, the net difference, and amount of funds transferred from the district's general operating fund to cover food service program deficits.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Nudelman
Director, School Finance