

STATE OF ALASKA

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

Department of Education & Early Development

Office of the Commissioner

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February 10, 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 questions asked by Senators Stedman and McGuire in Senate Finance Committee hearing on Monday, February 7, 2011 related to SB3, "An Act providing for funding for school lunch and breakfast."

- *Will more districts offer programs?*
- *Will students be added?*

The funding in SB3 will not necessarily add programs or increase the number of students served.

Lunch: Currently 47 of 53 districts participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) representing 99.6% of the average daily membership in the state. Districts serving lunch provide lunch at nearly all individual school sites within the district, the exceptions being some alternative schools, and a few schools with very small populations that may meet meal requirements in other ways rather than NSLP.

The six small districts that do not participate in NSLP report that there are hurdles to participating in NSLP such as: lack of affordability for up to date kitchens that meet health standards, staff salaries, and required paperwork required for implementing NSLP. In summary, Alaska is overwhelmingly making available NSLP lunches in our schools each day.

Breakfast: Currently 37 of 53 districts participate in the NSLP breakfast program representing 96.6% of the average daily membership in the state. The 17 districts that do not have an NSLP

breakfast program account for 4,096 average daily membership. A sampling of the 17 districts not participating in breakfast identified the following hurdles: We can't even afford lunch and our bus routes are too long to accommodate delivering students for breakfast. The percent of paid students is too high and our bus routes would need to be changed which would cost money in order to accommodate breakfast.

Districts serving breakfast generally serve breakfast at all sites; there are two major exceptions, one being Anchorage. Anchorage has approximately 28 sites, many elementary, where there is lunch but not breakfast. Anchorage surveys parents for potential participation before making a decision to add breakfast programs at individual sites.

If breakfast participation was added at the 28 Anchorage sites and in the 17 districts, the fiscal note impact would be approximately \$130,000 annually.

The department continues to encourage and support districts in participating in NSLP breakfast and lunch programs.

- *Can state agriculture be more involved for better food?*

Yes. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is administered at the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) within the Teaching and Learning Support division by the Child Nutrition Services (CNS) section. CNS promotes and supports the use of local food in a number of ways. Two years ago the department communicated with a local company and the outcome has been a locally produced salmon wrap that is now provided in the school lunch program. Other similar collaborative efforts are under way.

Multiple school lunch programs are actively using Alaskan fish in school meals. Training and information are provided to schools for the safe use of donated game meats in school meals where wild game is a common resource.

The CNS staff attended the first federal Farm to School Summit in January in order to learn new approaches to bringing local foods to school food programs. The CNS staff is discussing outreach and other program components with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), as the DNR Farm to School Coordinator implements HB70 the farm to school program established in law in 2010.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Nudelman
Director, School Finance