

# **An Analysis of the Current Issues Providing Food to Preschool Children in Louisiana**

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# Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>Pgs. 2-4</b>
<b>II. Methodology</b>	<b>Pgs. 5-6</b>
<b>III. Everything on CEP</b>	<b>Pgs. 7-16</b>
• <i>Description</i>	<b>Pgs. 7-9</b>
• <i>Eligibility</i>	<b>Pgs. 9-11</b>
• <i>Funding</i>	<b>Pgs. 11-12</b>
• <i>Enrollment</i>	<b>Pgs. 12-14</b>
• <i>Nutritional Guidelines</i>	<b>Pgs. 14-15</b>
• <i>Benefits</i>	<b>Pgs. 15-16</b>
<b>IV. Everything on CACFP</b>	<b>Pgs. 17-24</b>
• <i>Description</i>	<b>Pgs. 17-18</b>
• <i>Eligibility</i>	<b>Pgs. 18-19</b>
• <i>Funding</i>	<b>Pgs. 19-20</b>
• <i>Enrollment</i>	<b>Pgs. 20-21</b>
• <i>Nutritional Guidelines</i>	<b>Pgs. 21-23</b>
• <i>Benefits</i>	<b>Pgs. 23-24</b>
<b>V. Louisiana</b>	<b>Pgs. 25-41</b>
• <i>Summary</i>	<b>Pg. 25</b>
• <i>Preschool Development Grants</i>	<b>Pgs. 25-27</b>
• <i>Expansion Grant in Louisiana</i>	<b>Pgs. 27-32</b>
• <i>Diverse Delivery</i>	<b>Pgs. 32-34</b>
• <i>Nasha Interview Revisited</i>	<b>Pgs. 34-36</b>
• <i>CEP in Louisiana</i>	<b>Pgs. 36-37</b>
• <i>Angela Interview and Children’s Coalition</i>	<b>Pgs. 37-39</b>
• <i>Fatima Interview and the Little Flower Academy</i>	<b>Pgs. 40-41</b>
• <i>Final Summary</i>	<b>Pgs. 41-42</b>
<b>VI. Options</b>	<b>Pgs. 43-47</b>
<b>VII. Recommendation</b>	<b>Pgs. 48-49</b>
<b>VIII. Further Research</b>	<b>Pg. 50</b>
<b>IX. Conclusion</b>	<b>Pg. 51</b>
<b>X. References</b>	<b>Pgs. 52-55</b>
<b>XI. Appendices</b>	<b>Pgs. 56-62</b>

## **I. Introduction:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has implemented several child nutrition programs over the years through grants, legislation, and policy changes. These federally funded child nutrition programs are available to the states. State agencies can apply for federal nutrition programs, and once accepted, administer the programs. The federal government reimburses schools, child care centers, and other organizations that participate in the USDA's child nutrition programs. Some examples of prominent programs are the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) ("School Meals," 2016).

While having these federal nutrition programs have provided immense benefits to children, alignment issues can occur with the implementation of new programs. This has been the case with the creation of the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). The CEP was created from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Levin and Neuberger, 2013). The CEP was first implemented in some Louisiana schools starting in the 2014-2015 school year. After implementation, alignment issues arose with the CACFP because of Louisiana's diverse delivery system. The major concern deals with the price of meals given to pre-kindergarten (pre-k) students attending preschool in child care centers.

Rebecca Marek from the United States Department of Education (USED) summarized the main problem as, if a school district in Louisiana qualifies for CEP, all pre-k students would qualify for a free meal if they attend a school. However, if a pre-k student attends a child care center through diverse delivery in the same district that has

CEP, the child would not receive a free meal. The pre-k student would typically get a reduced meal through the CACFP instead (Marek, 2016).

Essentially the three questions this paper addresses in extensive detail are:

1. What are the differences between the CEP and CACFP?
2. What are the current issues in Louisiana dealing with CEP and CACFP, and why is this happening?
3. What are some options to solve this alignment concern in Louisiana?

More specifically, the purpose of this paper is to first examine the CEP and the CACFP in more detail. Since the CEP is a relatively new program, it is important for the differences between the CEP and the CACFP to be discussed at the outset. I will then move my attention to focus on Louisiana.

Louisiana has a diverse delivery system allowing parents to choose to send their pre-k child to a wide variety of state funded programs located in public schools, child care centers, and Head Start centers. This has caused problems regarding food prices because public schools can adopt the CEP, but child care centers can only implement CACFP (Marek, 2016).

Additionally, if the child care center is part of the diverse delivery system, and has a state funded pre-k program, the CEP still does not apply to the child care center even if the child is enrolled at the district. State funded child care centers do not have the option to have CEP, and can either have no federal food program, or choose to apply for the CACFP. This means that not all pre-k children attending state funded classrooms in child care centers would receive a free meal.

After looking at the concerns in Louisiana, this paper concludes with several options to address these issues. I believe the current issues can be fixed. Since the CEP and CACFP are both federally funded programs, they should be able to align together. Pre-k children attending child care centers through diverse delivery in the same school district that has CEP should be able to get free meals.

## **II. Methodology:**

This study is an exhaustive independent research effort, along with several interviews and email conversations with early childhood professionals. Most of the information about the CEP and CACFP was obtained through research. This includes information from the USDA, USED, and the Food and Research Action Center (FRAC). Other information about the CEP and CACFP was collected from memos by early childhood and educational organizations, and video webinar series' produced by the USDA and FRAC. Any extra research was obtained from conversations with analysts working in the Child Nutrition Programs of the USDA. The six components of the CEP and CACFP this paper reviews are description, eligibility, funding, enrollment, nutritional guidelines, and benefits.

After reviewing all the elements of the CEP and CACFP, the next part of the study investigates the issues occurring in Louisiana. All of this information was obtained through interviews and additional resources given to me by the experts I interviewed. Basically, a top-down strategy was used. The study examines the problems in Louisiana by starting with a general overview, and then breaking down the problem and getting smaller and more specific. I first delved into the analysis by interviewing people in the USED. Next, I interviewed Nasha Patel, early childhood policy analyst at the Louisiana Department of Education (LED). Furthermore, other brief conversations took place at this stage with early childhood professionals that went over the preschool expansion grant and Louisiana's diverse delivery system. Along with the CEP, the grant and delivery system are the main factors why the pre-k food alignment issues exist in Louisiana.

After exploring the alignment problems that could occur in the entire state of Louisiana, the study moves to the northeast region. I interviewed Angela D'Angelo, early child care and education expert from the Children's Coalition. The Children's Coalition is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with other institutions and agencies to address current issues for children involving education, healthy living, and youth development. The Children's Coalition operates in 12 northeast parishes in Louisiana ("About Us").

Getting even more specific, this study looks at Ouachita Parish. I interviewed Fatima, cafeteria manager from the Little Flower Academy child care center located in Monroe City within Ouachita Parish. The Little Flower Academy is part of the diverse delivery system, and has a state funded preschool program located in classrooms in the center. The Little Flower Academy child care center is a perfect example looking at alignment concerns because the entire Monroe City school district has CEP (Fatima, 2016).

The last part of the study gives potential options. These options were formulated on my own. Nevertheless, they are based on the extensive independent research and interviews that took place throughout the analysis. I discuss possible options to solve the alignment problem, and choose the best solution.

### **III. Everything on CEP**

*Description:*

The CEP is a program within the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and was created in a provision under the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act. The NSLP is a federal meal program administered in over 100,000 schools that provide free or reduced lunches to over 31 million children (“National School Lunch,” 2013). The NSLP was expanded under the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act. President Obama signed this act on December 13, 2010. The act allocated \$4.5 billion for five years to increase the amount of child nutrition programs in schools throughout the United States. The Healthy, Hunger Kids Free Act also created new nutrition standards for lunches, and increased the access for children to be eligible for free meals (“President Obama,” 2010).

What makes the CEP a unique provision in the act is that it is a universal food program that allows all students to have access to free breakfast and lunches in a school that has the CEP (“President Obama,” 2010). Any individual school or local education agencies (LEAs) that has high poverty rates can participate in CEP. The current measure of poverty in the United States uses a set of thresholds that look at family size, age composition, and income. A family is considered to be in poverty if their income is lower than the family’s determined threshold (“Census,” 2016). The poverty threshold updates for inflation using the consumer price index. An example of a family in poverty is two parents that make a combined \$24,000 a year, and have five children. I will go over the exact poverty eligibility requirements for the CEP in the eligibility section of the paper.



The CEP was originally phased in LEAs with high poverty rates over a three-year period starting on July 1, 2011. The first states that phased in CEP were Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia (Harkness et al. 2015). While there were some challenges with implementation, the CEP was an overall success.

The USDA published a CEP report in January 2015 evaluating the first three years of implementation. The authors based their evaluation on web surveys given to LEAs that implemented CEP. Also, interviews took place with the directors of State Child Nutrition Agencies and State Educational Agencies. The evaluation concluded that the CEP was successful in increasing the amount of children receiving free lunches. Most LEAs that were eligible for CEP chose to implement it. For example, in Illinois, 34 LEAs participated in the CEP during the first year it was offered. This number increased to 48 in the second year, and 69 in the third (Harkness et al. 2015).

Also, the CEP led to an increase in schools participating in the NSLP. Most LEAs enjoyed the CEP and thought it led to improved efficiency in the application and administrative processes. Furthermore, while federal reimbursements increased, it did not “adversely affect the financial bottom-line of food service operations” (Harkness et al. 2015). Moreover, the evaluation reported that the CEP did not have a positive or negative impact on meal quality, administrative costs, and meal claiming error. This could be the result of the evaluation being conducted too early after the states implemented CEP. It could take years to truly see some of the effects (Harkness et al. 2015).

After the three-year phase-in period, the CEP became available nationwide during the 2014-2015 school year. The Food and Research Action Center (FRAC) reported that 13,819 schools and 2,218 school districts participated in CEP during the 2014-2015 school year (“Community Eligibility”). Also, 6.4 million children are enrolled in CEP (“Community Eligibility”). The way the trend has been going, the number of children enrolled in CEP will continue to increase during the next few years.

*Eligibility:*

There are three requirements for schools and LEAs to be eligible to participate in the CEP. The first requirement is that the school has to already have the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Second, schools and LEAs eligible for the CEP must have an identified student percentage (ISP) of at least 40 percent (“Webinar CEP,” 2015). Students that are considered an identified student are from low-income families, and have already been certified for free school meals. What this means is that the CEP does not require parents to fill out applications for their child to participate in the CEP. Their child has already been certified for free meals, and are enrolled in programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start, and Even Start. Also, migrant youth, runaways, and homeless children are also considered identified students (“Webinar CEP,” 2015).

The ISP is calculated with a simple equation:

$$\text{Identified Student Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of Identified Students}}{\text{Total number of Enrolled Students}} \times 100$$

In the equation above, the total number of enrolled students includes all students enrolled at the school, and have access to at least one school meal a day. An example of a school having the necessary ISP to participate in the CEP is below:

$$46.7 \text{ percent} = \frac{647}{1385} \times 100$$

As mentioned earlier, schools can be grouped together and participate in the CEP. For groups that want to implement the CEP, the ISP is calculated using the totals for every school in the group. A school that has an ISP below 40 percent could still participate in the CEP if they are a part of a group of schools that have a combined ISP above 40 percent (“Webinar CEP,” 2015). Entire school districts (LEAs) can participate in CEP as well. An example of grouping is below:

	Identified Students	Enrollment	ISP
SCHOOL A	225	650	34.6%
SCHOOL B	450	725	62%
SCHOOL C	345	500	69%
SCHOOLS A, B, and C	1020	1875	54.4%

In the example above, School A can participate in CEP even if they have a 34.6 ISP because they are grouped with Schools B and C to form an average ISP of 54.4.

Finally, the last requirement for eligibility is the schools need to be compliant. State agencies have the ability to look at the school's history to ensure they have been accountable for adopting various programs successfully in the past.

*Funding:*

Reimbursement rates for schools electing to have CEP are based on the ISP with a multiplier of 1.6 ("Memo: CEP," 2014). The 1.6 multiplier essentially predicts what the free and reduced percentages would be if applications were collected for the CEP. Schools multiply their ISP by 1.6 to give them the percent of total meals that will be reimbursed at the federal free rate ("Memo: CEP," 2014). If the total ISP with the multiplier is below 100 percent, the remaining percentage of meals is reimbursed at the federal paid rate. If you do the simple multiplication, all meals will be reimbursed at the federal free rate if a school or LEA has an ISP of 62.5 percent. This is because 62.5 multiplied by 1.6 equals 100 percent. During the phase-in period, the LEAs that participated in the CEP had an average ISP of 55 percent (Harkness et al. 2015). This means that most of the meals were reimbursed at the federal free rate, with an average of 12 percent of meals needed to be reimbursed at the federal paid rate.

If schools and LEAs do not meet the federal free reimbursement rate with an ISP of 100 using the 1.6 multiplier, they will need to cover the remaining costs through nonfederal sources. However, the federal paid rate for the CEP is the same rate as all the other food programs offered by the USDA. Moreover, the CEP has the same standard operating procedures as all other programs when the federal reimbursement rate is less than the total cost of meals ("Memo: CEP," 2014). It is up to the schools to decide if

they should implement CEP, and are able to pay for the meals at the federal paid reimbursement rate. They should look at all cost ramifications associated with adopting CEP.

*Enrollment:*

The CEP has flexible enrollment policies because it can be implemented at individual schools, groups of schools, and at the district wide level. Schools and LEAs choosing to participate in CEP must meet certain deadlines. The USDA provides an organized table of all the necessary requirements state agencies and LEAs must meet at certain dates throughout the year. Currently, the dates for the deadlines have remained the same each year. LEAs can have CEP implemented for the next school year if they meet all the requirements in time.

The USDA table is reproduced verbatim on the following page. It was obtained from a USDA memo about the CEP given to state directors of child nutrition programs in every state on July 25, 2014 (“Memo: CEP,” 2014).

Date	Requirement
April 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The identified student percentage must be established for determining the eligibility and the claiming percentages to be used.</li> </ul>
April 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State agencies notify LEAs of district wide eligibility status and provide guidance and information.</li> <li>LEAs submit school level eligibility information to the State agency. State agencies may exempt LEAs from this requirement if the State agency has direct access to school-level data.</li> </ul>
May 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State agencies post the LEA district-wide and school-level lists on their website and send the link to Food Nutrition Service of USDA</li> </ul>
June 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested and eligible LEAs notify their State agency of their intent to participate under CEP.</li> <li>LEAs planning to participate in CEP the following school year submit to the State agency identified student and total enrollment data that reflects enrollment on April 1.</li> </ul>

To ensure the correct ISP, it is important for schools and agencies to collaborate student information. If the data can be exchanged and shared efficiently, schools will be able to maximize their ISP, and know what students are already eligible for free meals based on their enrollment in other programs. Recently, state agencies and LEAs have been using automated data systems to improve their accuracy in finding out how many students should receive free meals (“Webinar CEP,” 2015). Automated data processing helps store, send, and manipulate data at a fast rate.

Moreover, the USDA provides an estimator tool that lets schools compare what their federal reimbursement level would be with CEP, and without CEP (“Estimator Tool”). The estimator can also formulate the reimbursement levels with schools grouped together. It is beneficial for LEAs to use this tool to see how reimbursement levels would change, and the cost ramifications adopting CEP.

Another important feature to mention regarding enrollment is that CEP has a four-year participation cycle (“Memo: CEP,” 2014). Schools and LEAs that elect to have CEP

do not need to determine their ISP every year during the cycle. For example, during year three of CEP, the school can choose to use the same ISP they submitted during year one. Only after the four-year cycle is up do the schools participating need to calculate their ISP again. There is also a grace year period where if a school does not have an ISP of 40 percent after the fourth year, can continue to implement CEP for another year if the ISP is at least 30 percent (“Memo: CEP,” 2014). It is important to note that schools have the option to stop CEP at any time. They do not need to complete the four-year cycle.

*Nutritional Guidelines:*

The CEP follows the same nutritional guidelines as the other federally funded school nutrition programs because it is a provision under the NSLP. The five main food components served at lunch are fruits, vegetables, grains, meat/meat alternate, and milk (“New Meal Pattern,” 2012). The amount of food received depends on the age of the student. For example, an elementary school student under the CEP would receive .5 cups of fruit a day. A high school student would receive one cup of fruit a day. Another example is a middle school student receives 3.75 cups of vegetables a week, while a student in high school gets 5 cups (“New Meal Pattern,” 2012).

Standards for healthier meals have improved over the years. The same year CEP was available for implementation in every state, several new meal standards were created. The beginning of the 2014 school year required all grains offered must be whole grain rich. Whole grain rich foods are at least 50 percent whole grain (“New Meal Pattern,” 2012). Additionally, food programs are taking into consideration allergies and new eating habits by offering more meat alternates. For example, tofu and soy products are

now readily available for consumption. The USDA has also grouped vegetables into subgroups. An example subgroup is the dark greens group consisting of broccoli and spinach. Another is the red group, including vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes. The food programs ensure these subgroups of vegetables create variety in diets. They suggest schools should change the subgroups of vegetables offered throughout the week (“New Meal Pattern,” 2012).

*Benefits of CEP:*

The CEP has been successful. Any school that elects to have CEP will provide free meals to all students. Since every student eats free, there will no longer be any stigmatization against students that do not pay for school lunches (“Fact Sheet,” 2015). Students will not be aware if their friends are from low-income families, and would normally not be able to pay for lunches because everyone will now eat free.

CEP eases the burden for parents because they do not need to fill out any applications for their child to participate. Schools obtain the ISP by using applications that have already been filled out for other programs like SNAP and TANF. Also, parents no longer need to worry about lunch accounts (“Fact Sheet,” 2015). Lunch accounts do not exist in schools that have CEP because parents would not be charged for meals.

For administration, CEP has streamlined the meal service (“Fact Sheet,” 2015). It is much faster for students to grab their lunch and not worry about paying at the end of the line. This gives students more time to enjoy their lunch. The school administration would also no longer have to track unpaid meal charges. They can instead focus their attention on ensuring students are receiving healthy meals.



As mentioned earlier, the number of schools participating in CEP is growing. CEP is in every state and has been implemented in over 13,000 schools nationwide (“Webinar CEP,” 2015). State agencies are doing a great job at promoting the program. Parents can find information about CEP through school websites and emails. Letters have also been successful. Appendix A is a sample letter given to parents created by the Vermont Department for Child and Families that goes over the CEP (“New this Year”). The letter summarizes the benefits of CEP to parents. It emphasizes that CEP is a free program, and shows how easy it is for schools to implement.

## **IV. Everything on CACFP**

### *Description:*

The CACFP is another federally funded food program administered by the USDA. It was established in 1968 under section 16 of the National School Lunch Act. Essentially, the USDA gives grants to state agencies. These state agencies work with organizations. Organizations that want to implement CACFP contact their state educational agency, and submit an application. Once the application is processed, the organization enters into an agreement with the state agency, and accept the responsibilities to implement CACFP (“CACFP”).

The purpose of CACFP is to provide subsidized nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults attending these organizations. It has had great success over the years providing quality meals. Studies have shown that child organizations that adopt CACFP have, “higher intakes of key nutrients, fewer servings of fats and sweets, than children in non-participating care” (“FRAC: CACFP”). FRAC also produced a report stating that CACFP is, “one of the major factors influencing quality care, reporting that 87 percent of the family child care homes considered to be providing quality care participated in CACFP” (“FRAC: CACFP”).

Moreover, the number of child care centers that have implemented CACFP has been increasing every year since in 1991 (Burroughs et al. 2016). In 2013, it was reported that CACFP provides meals to 3.5 million children and 16,000 adults every day. Furthermore, FRAC reported CACFP gave out over 1.96 billion meals in 2013. In 2014,

3 million children enrolled in CACFP. This was an 8 percent increase from 2013 (Burroughs et al. 2016).

*Eligibility:*

The types of organizations that can participate in CACFP are child care centers, day care homes, afterschool care programs, emergency shelters, and adult day care centers (“Why CACFP,” 2014). I am going to be focusing on child care centers in this paper because that is where the alignment issues are occurring in Louisiana. Some examples of child care centers include public nonprofit, private nonprofit, for-profit, and Head Start facilities. This differs from CEP because CACFP cannot be implemented in public schools, and CEP can only be in schools.

All child care centers can choose to have CACFP. The only requirements for child care centers is that CACFP can only provide meals to children 12 and under. The CACFP also ensures children receive up to two meals and one snack daily. Furthermore, there is a separate eligibility requirement for profit child care centers than other centers. In order for profit child care centers to participate in CACFP, at least 25 percent of the children attending must come from families that have incomes below 185 percent the poverty level (“Why CACFP,” 2014).

There are different eligibility requirements for the price of meals for children attending child care centers. Children are either eligible for free, reduced, or paid meals in a center that has CACFP. Children that live in households that have incomes below 130 percent of poverty are eligible for free meals. Students eligible for reduced price meals come from households that have incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of

the poverty level (“FRAC Fact Sheet”). Appendix B shows the income eligibility guidelines for household size and income used for CACFP. It goes over all the requirements showing when a child will receive a free or reduced price meal. For example, a family of four would receive a free meal under the CACFP if they had a yearly income of \$31,525 or less (“Income Eligibility,” 2015).

Children from all other households would receive the CACFP at the paid rate. It is the child care center’s responsibility to determine which children qualify for free, reduced, or paid meals. To figure out this information, child care centers require parents to fill out an income eligibility statement. This would determine whether a child would qualify for a free or reduced meal under the CACFP. Similar to the CEP, children already enrolled in programs such as SNAP and TANF, Head Start, and Even Start would be eligible to receive free meals (“Why CACFP,” 2014). But, even if their child is already enrolled in these programs, the parent still needs to fill out an additional application for CACFP. This is different from CEP because no extra applications are required.

*Funding:*

In 2013, the USDA reimbursed \$2.6 billion to organizations participating in CACFP (“FRAC Fact Sheet”). As mentioned earlier, reimbursement rates are based on free, reduced, and paid rates. Child care centers participating in CACFP submit claims for their reimbursement rates to state agencies monthly. The state agencies then work with the USDA to receive the reimbursements. Reimbursement rates for the CACFP are revised once a year based on the changes in the consumer price index. The table below

represents the payment rates for meals in effect from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 in 48 states (Hawaii and Alaska have different reimbursement rates) (“Why CACFP,” 2014). In the table, the meal rates are based in whole or fractions of dollars. For example, the federal reimbursement rate for a reduced price lunch is \$2.67.

Child Care Centers	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
Paid	.29	.29	.07
Reduced Price	1.36	2.67	.42
Free	1.66	3.07	.84

*Enrollment:*

Child care centers that elect to participate in the CACFP must notify their state educational agency. The USDA provides the contact information of the state agency in charge of CACFP. This helps child care centers know who they should reach out to, and where to apply. Once approved, it is the responsibility of the child care center to know the household income information of the children attending the center (“CACFP”). It would also be essential to know whether a child attending the center is in SNAP, TANF, or another welfare program. Any student already in a food welfare program will receive meals at the free rate.

If the center does not have certain information on the child, they will need to hand out applications for parents to fill out. Appendix C is an example of an application from a Kansas child care center that has adopted CACFP (“Eligibility Form”). This is what a

typical application would look like in other states as well. The application is standard, and requires parents to fill out information including household size and income. Having to fill out an application is a big difference between the CACFP and CEP. Parents do not need to fill out any applications in order for their child to receive meals through CEP. However, child care centers that participate in CACFP need to hand out applications to parents. Once the CACFP application is submitted, it is the responsibility of the center to know which children will receive free, reduced, or paid meals.

*Nutritional Guidelines:*

Nutritional guidelines for the CEP and CACFP are relatively similar since they are both federal food programs. The CACFP has five components of lunch including fruits, vegetables, grains, meat/meat alternate, and milk. The serving size for meals resembles the CEP guidelines as well. Children ages 3-5 receive a half a cup of fruit a day under the CACFP (“Meal Patterns”). Under the CEP, elementary school students are provided with a half of cup of fruit for each lunch as well.

The CACFP also offers a snack, which includes the selection of two out of the five lunch components (“Meal Patterns”). For example, a child can select an apple and a muffin as their snack representing the fruit and grains components. Appendix D shows the components and the type of foods offered by the CACFP in more detail (“Meal Patterns”). The diagram only shows the lunch components of CACFP. The breakfast and snack meals vary slightly from lunch.

Recently, there has been a push to provide healthier meals to students in CACFP. The Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act in 2010 started the enactment of healthier meals

under the CACFP (“School Meals,” 2016). This act has also been applied to the CEP. The act attempts to create “new standards to align school meals with the latest nutrition science and the real world circumstances of America’s schools” (“School Meals,” 2016). The USDA wants to update the quality of meals in all their federal food programs.

In 2015, the USDA released several proposed rule changes to update meals specifically for CACFP (Carroll et al. 2015). The goal of the proposed changes was to improve the meal quality and nutritional components. Overall, the rule requires an increased serving of fruits and vegetables, and a deduction in sugar and fat intakes. The new rules also attempts to address the growing concerns of obesity by offering children balanced meals with a wide variety of options. Moreover, the various changes to CACFP would not cost any more money for tax payers. Specific examples of the proposed rule changes include:

- Milk offered to children must be one percent or fat free.
- Tofu will be allowed as a meat alternate.
- One part of the snack component must either be a fruit or vegetable.
- Child care centers can no longer use frying as a meal preparation method.
- Grain-based desserts are not counted as part of the grain component.
- At least one grain served a day must be whole grain (Carroll et al. 2015).

The USDA has asked for feedback from state agencies and other organizations about the 2015 proposed rule. Once the USDA has gathered and recorded all the feedback, a final rule will be enacted. According to Holly Prestegaard, Nutritionist from

the USDA's Western Regional Office, the final rule for nutritional changes of CACFP will be released in spring 2016 (Prestegaard, 2016).

*Benefits of CACFP:*

Similar to the CEP, the CACFP has provided many benefits. The CACFP currently serves over 3.3 million children across the United States. The CACFP serves meals that are nutritious and high quality ("Why CACFP," 2014). Most child care centers that have CACFP are regarded as better quality than child care centers that do not have CACFP. Additionally, CACFP ensures that children start with good healthy eating habits early in life. They can continue these eating habits throughout their childhood.

While the CEP only provides food to children, the CACFP goes much farther than just giving nutritious meals. There are several other components to the CACFP including promoting overall wellness, physical activity, and healthy environments ("Nutrition Education," 2015). The USDA has created promotional flyers that briefly go over some of the resources CACFP provides. Appendix E is an example of what a promotional flyer looks like ("USDA Flyer").

Furthermore, the USDA has created a CACFP provider handbook that they give to parents and child care centers that have implemented CACFP. The main aspects of the handbook are to give ideas on games to play outside, and recommendations for active play. Moreover, the handbook provides strategies to incorporate hands-on learning, and tips for limiting the amount of television and other electronics children use ("Nutrition Education," 2015).



The USDA website has a section specifically for CACFP that gives additional resources on many topic areas. For example, there are nutritional games for children to play, different recipes and cookbooks for child care centers, and tips for parents on how to cook healthy foods at home (“Nutrition Education,” 2015). The CACFP section is well organized, and provides many recommendations for parents and child care centers to help children.

The last benefit I want to mention is the ability to integrate local foods with CACFP. A section in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act created a Farm to School Program, which promotes local foods to be made available to child care centers if they participate in the CACFP (“Memo: Local Foods,” 2015). Under the CACFP, child care centers can purchase local foods, and have them be reimbursed at the federal level. Other features of the Farm to School Program include agricultural educational programs, field trips to farms, and taste testing local foods (“Memo: Local Foods,” 2015).

## **V. Louisiana**

### *Summary of Louisiana's Problem:*

Now that the exhaustive review of the CEP and CACFP is complete, it is time to focus on how the food alignment problem in Louisiana developed. According to the United States Department of Education (USED), the current issues occurring in Louisiana are that pre-k children attending child care centers who are enrolled through their school district may not be receiving free meals. If child care centers have CACFP, the center will get some sort of federal reimbursement for providing meals as explained in the CACFP section of the paper. However, if they do not have CACFP, the child care center will have to pay out of pocket for providing meals. Part of the parents' money paying to send their child to a child care center goes towards the center providing meals. But, children enrolled at the district to attend pre-k in child care centers do not have to pay any fee unless they participate in other programs offered by the center. The reason for this has to do with Louisiana's diverse delivery system, and the United States Department of Education Preschool Development Grants (PDG). The next section covers information about the PDGs at the federal level.

### *The Preschool Development Grants (PDG):*

The PDG was a grant competition created by the USED and the Department of Health and Human Services. The discretionary grants awarded millions of dollars to states that applied to receive grant money. Applications for states became available on August 13, 2014. The applications needed to be signed by the Governor of the state, and

another representative from a state agency. The states that were accepted to receive grant money was announced on December 31, 2014 (“Preschool Grants,” 2016).

The grants served two purposes for states that were awarded the money. The grants were meant to: “build or enhance a preschool program infrastructure that would enable the delivery of high-quality preschool services to children, and expand high-quality preschool programs in targeted communities that would serve as models for expanding preschool to all 4-year olds from low and moderate income families” (“Preschool Grants,” 2016). From what I gathered, the grant money essentially tried to make pre-k education more readily available for children. The grant requires state and local governments to work together to improve the quality of pre-k education, and eventually ensure all children will have access to attend preschool.

The two types of PDGs offered are the development and expansion grants. Development grants were awarded to states that either had less than 10 percent of pre-k children enrolled in a state preschool program, or did not have any state preschool programs (“What are PDG”). The intention of the development grants was to start building the infrastructure needed to install high quality preschool education programs in the selected states. The expansion grants were given to states that already had some sort of state preschool program, or have already have been awarded with the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant (“What are PDG”). The intention of the expansion grants was to sustain high quality state preschool programs, and to provide more children with access to preschool programs in at least two additional high-need communities.

After the application process, six states were awarded the development grants (“Preschool Grants,” 2016).

They are:

- Alabama, Montana, Nevada, Arizona, Nevada, and Hawaii

Thirteen states received the expansion grants. These include:

- Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and Louisiana

The total amount of grant money given out to the states was \$226,419,228 (“Preschool Grants,” 2016). In 2014, Louisiana received \$2,437,982 in expansion grant money for 2015 school year. Louisiana also received an additional \$32 million over the next four years (Williams, 2014). The next section of the paper goes over what Louisiana did with the expansion grant money. This had a large impact on how the pre-k food alignment problem began.

#### *Preschool Expansion Grant Program in Louisiana:*

To find out more information about the pre-k food alignment problem and the preschool expansion grant program, I had a phone interview with Nasha Patel. Nasha is a policy analyst for early childhood at the Louisiana Department of Education (LED). Nasha was one of the first people who brought the attention of the alignment concerns to the USED.

The interview consisted of two main components. The first part was about how Louisiana implemented the expansion grant program. Nasha gave me extensive information on the expansion grant, and provided me with several resources to look over.

The main reason why Louisiana was accepted by the USED to receive the grant money of \$32 million was because they had a plan to unify early childhood education (Patel, 2016). In 2012, the LED reported that only 54 percent of children attending kindergarten for the first time went to some sort of preschool program (“Grant Overview”). The department wanted to increase this percentage.

The Louisiana legislature passed Act 3 in 2012, which created early childhood networks across the state. The goal of the act was to unify preschools, child care centers, and Head Start programs. This unification called for the same development strategies, academic standards, teacher expectations, and an overall collaboration between all pre-k programs. Moreover, early childhood networks led to pre-k in schools, child care centers, and Head Start programs to work together to serve more at-risk children, train teachers the same regardless of where they work, and share information efficiently (“Grant Overview”).

The early stages of the childhood networks were working, but Louisiana needed more money to address the needs of low-income neighborhoods and at-risk children. The purpose of the expansion grant was to use the funds to expand the early childhood networks throughout the state in low-income areas (Patel, 2016). Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are many childhood networks that did not receive the expansion grant money.

Nasha informed me that one thing that was stressed about using the expansion grant was the continued adoption of the parent choice model. She said, that while the parent choice model could be implemented in parishes throughout Louisiana, the expansion grant highlights the importance in using it when receiving the federal money

(Patel, 2016). The parent choice model lets parents choose what pre-k program they feel is best for their child. Through the early childhood networks, parents can choose if they want to send their child to pre-k in a school setting, child care center, or Head Start program (“Preschool Expansion”). The parent choice model is essentially diverse delivery. I discuss diverse delivery in greater detail in the diverse delivery section.

The expansion grant also expanded the networks by improving and creating new pre-k seats. It is predicted that over the 4 years the expansion grant is in effect, an additional 4,600 at-risk children will be able to attend a high-quality pre-k programs though the network (“Preschool Expansion”). Also, an additional 6,000 at-risk children will receive the benefits of improved pre-k programs (“Preschool Expansion”). The table below estimates the number of children served with improved or additional seats over the four years. The table was obtained from the LED.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
New Seats Created	340	660	440	360
Continued from Prior Year	N/A	340	1000	1440
Total Seats Funded	340	1000	1440	1800
Improved Seats Funded	442	1300	1872	2340

The early childhood networks thought it was necessary to have a leading organization improve coordination, scheduling, and collaboration efforts of pre-k programs. With the addition of new seats, pre-k programs improved collaboration with each other though the creation of local groups to serve as Lead Agencies (LED, 2015).

The two main duties of Lead Agencies are to aid in classroom observations and manage enrollment for all pre-k programs receiving money from the expansion grant. Two examples of Lead Agencies in Louisiana are the Children’s Coalition covering northeast Louisiana, and the Agenda for Children in New Orleans (Patel, 2016).

All preschool childhood networks were required to have a Lead Agency by the spring of 2015. To become a Lead Agency, the organization must submit an application to the LED. The LED says an agency can be, “Any public, private, or non-profit entity or consortium with an educational or social services mission may apply to be a Lead Agency. In total, Lead Agencies will be eligible for nearly \$5 million in funding to conduct classroom observations, train and support teachers, and conduct a comprehensive enrollment system” (LED, 2015). If the Lead Agency is not a school board, it has an obligation to work with school boards to decide which schools, child care centers, and Head Start programs will be a part of the preschool childhood network and receive the expansion grant money.

Child care centers were informed about the expansion grant and the networks through director’s meetings and emails from the school districts. Child care centers that are interested must submit an application to the school district. The school district decides which child care center will receive the federal grant money by visiting the center and conducting a series of interviews. Once accepted, the child care center becomes a part of the early childhood network (Patel, 2016).

Parents can then choose to send their child to pre-k in the child care center free of charge if they meet the at-risk requirements of low income. The parent choice model is an important feature in the networks and expansion grants. Low-income households will

have the ability to select from a wide range of pre-k programs, which they did not have as options before the networks and grant money. It is important to note that all pre-k children attending child care centers through the expansion grant are officially enrolled through the school district (Patel, 2016). This unification effort ensures the school districts are still responsible for the pre-k children academically, even if a parent wants to send their child to a child care center.

A specific example of successful collaboration efforts occurred in the Orleans Parish. The New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) of the Agenda for Children is a Leading Agency that is comprised of 150 public schools, child care centers, and Head Start Programs (“NOEEN Grant Overview”). The LED gave some expansion grant money to the NOEEN for the 2015-2016 school year. The expansion grant expanded the childhood network, and also created 120 additional pre-k seats in 6 different child care centers. The six child care centers are required to each have 20 pre-k children who are also eligible for a free or reduced price lunch (“NOEEN Grant Overview”). Other specific requirements child care centers need to abide by in the Orleans Parish to receive expansion grant money include:

- Partners with a public school.
- Quality start rating of at least two stars.
- At least 700 square feet of classroom space for new enrolled pre-k students (“NOEEN Grant Overview”)

The child care centers are unified with the public schools in the school districts. For example, they are unified in academic standards and teacher expectations. Once



again, this means that all pre-k children enrolled in the six child care centers receiving grant money will be enrolled at the district. The preschool expansion grant allotted \$5,185 per child to be enrolled in the six child care center classrooms. Approximately \$1,500 a month covered the costs of child care center classroom's paraprofessionals. Another \$2,500 a month went to overhead and miscellaneous costs for the classrooms ("NOEEN Grant Overview"). The school partners of the child care centers were also reimbursed for the cost of the teacher's salary. The teacher is still hired by the school district, even if they are placed in one of the child care center classrooms.

Other preschool expansion grants were given to Lead Agencies of childhood networks in the Caddo, Iberville, Lincoln, and Rapides parishes. Part of Ouachita parish, the City of Monroe school district also received preschool expansion grant funding ("Preschool Expansion"). All of these parishes have high rates of poverty. The goal for the 2016-2017 school year is for every parish and school district that has implemented childhood networks will be able to receive some state or federal funding to improve pre-k programs, and install the parent choice model.

*Diverse Delivery:*

Diverse Delivery is an important feature of the expansion grants. It was started in 2010 (Gallagher and Bronfin, 2013). This was a few years before Louisiana received the federal expansion grant. The preschool expansion grant is one of the many ways partnerships through diverse delivery can be funded. Other ways can include title 1, Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program, Childcare assistance program, and Head Start. Like the childhood networks created, diverse delivery is a collaboration

effort between schools, child care centers, communities, and families. Diverse delivery promotes the idea of creating public pre-k programs available in many different settings (Patel, 2016).

Partnerships usually occur between child care centers and LEAs. School districts will create contracts with child care centers. While the child care centers provide classroom space for pre-k, the school district would still be responsible for paying the teachers and paraprofessionals who work in the child care center pre-k classroom. The district also supplies the materials for the class. A current example of an LEA and child care center partnership through diverse delivery is the Livingston Parish School System (LPSS) and the Fundamental Early Learning Center in Baton Rouge. The LPSS contracted out with the Fundamental Early Learning Center to provide public pre-k (Gallagher and Bronfin, 2013). Even if pre-k is located in the center, the academic standards and other expectations are still decided by the LPSS. The children enrolled in the public pre-k program in the child care center would also be enrolled through the LPSS.

Another feature of diverse delivery is the parent choice model. Diverse delivery lets parents choose which setting they think will be best for their child. For example, a parent can send their child to a child care center through diverse delivery if that child care center is offering public pre-k programs. The integration of pre-k programs improves the quality regardless of the classroom location. Louisiana's early childhood comprehensive system Brightstart, states other benefits from diverse delivery:

- Schools: reduces costs, do not need to add more school buildings, increases the amount of children attending pre-k through the public system.
- Child care centers: increases business, improves quality of pre-k, higher retention rates.
- Communities: better efficiency, organizations working together, unification, more children will be able to attend pre-k.
- Families: more options for children, less transportation (Gallagher and Bronfin, 2013).

Diverse delivery is working. There is a greater collaboration effort among school districts and organizations to provide the best pre-k possible. Furthermore, the federal preschool expansion grant highlights the importance of using diverse delivery and creating childhood networks throughout the state. The only issue diverse delivery and the expansion grant have caused has to do with serving food to pre-k children in the child care centers. Nasha goes over the lunch concerns in the second half of the interview.

*Nasha Interview Revisited - Food Alignment Problems:*

The second part of the interview with Nasha really hit home the problem occurring in Louisiana. She informed me that the main problem arises from preschool children attending child care centers through the federal expansion grant and diverse delivery (Patel, 2016). These children are enrolled at the district, but attend pre-k in a child care center free of charge to the parents. While the school district is in charge of

the pre-k student academically, the child care center is responsible for providing food even if the child is only going to the center for the free preschool class. Essentially, children who attend public pre-k in a child care center are not getting the same lunch benefit as children who attend preschool in a school building.

Child care centers can participate in CACFP, but only schools and LEAs can implement CEP. Because child care centers cannot implement CEP, students attending pre-k in these centers may not necessarily get free meals. The child care center may not have CACFP either. If a parent sends their child to public pre-k in a child care center, the child care center is going to have to pay for the meals (Patel, 2016). Also, they will not get reimbursed by the federal government if they do not have CACFP.

Moreover, most of the school districts in the six parishes that received expansion grant money qualify for CEP. This means that child care centers participating in diverse delivery located in school districts that have CEP would still not be able to provide free meals through CEP. This is an issue because the children attending these child care centers are still enrolled through the school district. They should be given free meals as well since the pre-k program in the child care center is essentially the exact same program in public schools. The setting is the only thing that is different.

If a child care center has CACFP, the parents would be forced to enroll and apply at the center to receive a free or reduced meal. Parents would not need to fill out any applications if they send their children to pre-k in a school that has CEP. Nasha gave me an example of a school district in Baton Rouge that has CEP, as well as increasing the amount pre-k classrooms in child care centers through the expansion grant. If she sent her child to pre-k in a Baton Rouge public school, her child would get a free meal.

However, if she chose to send her child to pre-k in a child care center, CEP would not apply anymore. Nasha would need to fill out an application to participate in CACFP if the child care center had implemented it. She would have received a free lunch at the school for her child, but instead the child would only qualify for a reduced lunch at the child care center (Patel, 2016).

Nasha thinks there needs to be some sort of alignment between the food programs. Since the CEP and CACFP are both federal food programs, they should be able to align so that child care centers located in CEP districts will automatically be able to provide free lunches to pre-k students attending the center through the grant. There are currently 12 child care centers that have diverse delivery through the expansion grant in districts that also have CEP (Patel, 2016). With more expansion grant money coming in over the next few years, the number of child care centers receiving the grant will continue to increase. This will lead to greater alignment problems. In the next section, I present current data on the number of school districts and schools that have CEP. This shows the potential to where the pre-k food problems will expand.

#### *CEP in Louisiana:*

There are currently 439 schools that have adopted CEP out of 990 eligible schools in Louisiana for the 2015-2016 school year. During the 2014-2015 school year, 44 school districts had implemented CEP and included 333 schools (“Louisiana CEP,” 2015). A total of 146,141 children were enrolled. Appendix F shows the ISP of all the schools in the Monroe City School Board District in Ouachita parish (“Louisiana CEP,” 2015). The entire school district in Monroe City has implemented CEP. Even if Neville

High School is below the 40 percent ISP, they are grouped with all the other schools in the school district.

School districts that have adopted CEP and received grant money to expand pre-k classrooms in child care centers could experience issues serving children lunch. A child should automatically be provided with free lunch because they are enrolled through the CEP school district. However, they will not be able to receive free lunch through CEP if they are attending pre-k in a child care center. This means, as CEP and the expansion grant continue to grow, so will the food problems.

At the end of the interview, I asked Nasha how she learned about the alignment issue. She said she found out about the problem in 2015 from Angela D'Angelo, early child care and education expert at the Children's Coalition (Patel, 2016). The next section of the paper covers my interview with Angela and the issues occurring in Monroe City.

*Angela Interview and the Children's Coalition:*

The Children's Coalition is a Lead Agency and nonprofit organization working with communities in 12 different parishes throughout northeast Louisiana. It was started in 1998 with its goal of collaborating with schools, families, and other partner organizations to better children through aspects of education, nutrition, and development ("Children's Coalition"). The mission of the Children's Coalition is to "identify and address critical issues related to children and youth and educate parents, professionals, and policy-makers on what works for children in our community" ("Children's

Coalition”). The Children’s Coalition has provided children with many school and community-based programs that have had success reaching their goals.

When I interviewed Angela, she told me about the Children’s Coalition and the current issues that are facing Monroe City. She said, the Children’s Coalition acts as a resource and referral office for child care centers (D’Angelo, 2016). Issues occurring in child care centers arose after diverse delivery and the expansion grant were given to the Monroe City School Board. The school board formed a partnership with the Children’s Coalition to create a childhood network.

The grant money was used to expand diverse delivery and increase the amount of pre-k programs in the district by placing them in two childcare centers, the Little Flower Academy and the Majestic Youth Development Incorporated. Two classes of 20 children each were placed in the Little Flower Academy, while one class of 20 students was implemented at the Majestic Youth Development. This added a total of 60 new seats for children to attend preschool (D’Angelo, 2016).

The pre-k program in these child care centers aligned their standards with the school board. The issue is that these child care centers are still in charge of some aspects of the children attending pre-k because they are housed in the center. The school board is accountable academically for the children attending pre-k in a child care center, but the child care centers are accountable for providing food (D’Angelo, 2016).

The children that attend pre-k housed in the Little Flower Academy and the Majestic Youth Development are still enrolled through the Monroe City school board. They attend the pre-k program in these child care centers for free (D’Angelo, 2016). However, it is the responsibility of the child care centers to provide food. Both child care

centers cannot participate in CEP even if the entire school district of Monroe City has it. For example, a child enrolled at the district would receive free meals through CEP attending preschool at Thomas Jefferson Elementary (“Louisiana CEP,” 2015), but not at the Little Flower Academy.

The food accountability issues also places a burden on the Little Flower Academy and the Majestic Youth Development center. If the center does not have CACFP, they will have to pay for the meals on their own to feed these children. They pay for meals from the tuition of the children attending the child care center. But, children attending the center for the pre-k program are not paying tuition unless they attend some other program offered by the center as well. They attend the pre-k class for free. This means the child care center will be forced to pay for them (D’Angelo, 2015).

Problems also happen if the center does have CACFP. Parents sending their child to pre-k in a school setting do not have to fill out any applications to receive the CEP. However, parents sending their child to pre-k in a child care setting would be forced to also enroll and submit an application to the center to receive a free or reduced meal through CACFP. There could be a scenario where they would receive a free meal through CEP, but only get a reduced price meal with the CACFP. The Majestic Youth Development does not have CACFP, while the Little Flower Academy does. I went on to interview Fatima, cafeteria manager from the Little Flower Academy to further my understanding of the food concerns at the center.



*Fatima Interview and the Little Flower Academy:*

The last interview I conducted was with Fatima, the cafeteria manager for the Little Flower Academy. The Little Flower Academy currently has 30 pre-k students attending the center through the expansion grant (Fatima, 2016). Fatima said the first problem she encountered was that nobody knew who was going to feed these 30 children. The Monroe City school board did not want to feed these children, so the responsibility rested with the Little Flower Academy. Even if the entire school district of Monroe City had implemented CEP, Fatima said she had to make the parents fill out extra paperwork for their children to enroll in CACFP at the center. This was especially difficult in the beginning because if the child got accepted into the school they wanted to be in, some of them decided to drop out of the pre-k program at the Little Flower Academy (Fatima, 2016).

Not only does Fatima think the extra paperwork for the CACFP is unnecessary because these children had already been enrolled at the district, but also the reimbursement rates for CACFP are different than CEP. The children attending should all eat free, but now some of them could be at a reduced price. Since the parents are not paying anything for their child to attend the child care center, Fatima says the Little Flower Academy is responsible for paying for these meals under the CACFP based on the reimbursement rates. She also informed me that the Majestic Youth Development does not have CACFP, and therefore has to pay for all the meals out of pocket for the children attending the pre-k program through the grant (Fatima, 2016). She thinks it is not fair that Monroe City school board has universal free meals in their schools because at the child care center's classrooms, extra paperwork needs to be filled out to be enrolled in CACFP.

*Food Problem Further Summarized:*

Before going over possible recommendations to solve the food concerns, I want to review the current problem one last time to get a clear understanding of what needs to be done. Here are the basics obtained from research and interviews:

- CEP is only offered in schools and LEAs. Schools that have implemented CEP, provide free lunch to all their students.
- CACFP is only offered in child care centers.
- The federal government expansion grant and diverse delivery expanded childhood networks, which placed public pre-k programs in child care center classrooms.
- Pre-k children attending these classes in child care centers are still enrolled at the district, and attend the class for free. The district is responsible for the children academically, but the child care center is responsible for providing food.
- Food alignment issues have occurred for children attending pre-k in the child care centers because centers thought it was the responsibility of the school district to provide meals for the pre-k children. CEP and CACFP are also not aligned with each other.

Questions that need to be addressed are:

- If pre-k children are enrolled through the district and attend the child care center, why can they not participate in CEP if the district has implemented it?

- If the child care center does not have CACFP, why does the burden to pay for the food go to the child care center?
- Why do parents need to submit applications to receive free or reduced priced meals through the CACFP if they are in the same district that has CEP? The academic experience is identical. The only thing different is the setting.

## **VI. Options:**

This section covers potential options that can be considered when trying to solve the current food issues in Louisiana. Although I developed these options myself, they are based on interviews and extensive research I gathered. I evaluate these options on four common criteria: political viability, economic feasibility, general effectiveness, and capability (Patton, Sawicki, and Clark, 2013). These criteria were formulated from a book called, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning* by Carl Patton, David Sawicki, and Jennifer Clark.

Political viability means the extent to which new policy will be supported by public officials, and other people in power (Patton et al. 2013). If policy does not have the support politically, it will be very challenging to pass. Economic feasibility essentially looks at how much the new policy will cost. Typical research that goes into economic feasibility include, do the benefits of the program outweigh the costs, and what are the direct, indirect, tangible, and intangible costs and benefits of the program (Patton et al. 2013). Moreover, general effectiveness is how successful the program is in creating its intended result (“Effectiveness”). The goals of effective policy show the program is valid and efficient. Lastly, capability looks at the possibilities of getting the new policy or program implemented. It asks the question, “Do the administrators and staff have the necessary skills to put the policy into effect” (Patton et al. 2013)? I used these four criteria when analyzing the potential options to fix the food issues in Louisiana. The four options are discussed below.

*Option 1. Align CEP and CACFP through act of Congress:*

	Political Viability	Economic Feasibility	General Effectiveness	Capability
Option 1: Alignment Act	NO	NO	YES	YES

While this option may be the most difficult to pass, it is highly effective and capable. This option would fix all current and future problems associated with these two federal food programs and diverse delivery. If Congress passes an alignment act, the same standards applied to CEP would carry over to CACFP. This means that child care centers that meet the minimum ISP of 40 percent would provide free meals to all students. Another part of the act could be that child care centers located in school districts that have implemented CEP would automatically be allowed to participate in it as well. There would no longer be the worry of parents sending their children through diverse delivery to pre-k in a child care center because they would be provided with the same lunch benefits as if they were sending their children to school.

An issue with this recommendation is that the federal government might not have the necessary funds to make CACFP aligned with CEP. It also puts more responsibility on the federal government to provide meals to children. This means it would not meet the criteria of being politically viable and economically feasible. Furthermore, the CACFP currently provides snack options, but the CEP does not. This may cause continued alignment issues. Perhaps the snack options become its own program entirely,

and just breakfast and lunches are aligned. Nevertheless, I do not think this will be an issue brought up in congress anytime soon. The alignment problems between the two programs only occur in districts that have received the federal expansion grant money to participate in diverse delivery. This is a very small number of districts in the United States.

*Option 2. Stop putting pre-k classrooms in Child Care Centers. Use the expansion grant money to build more classroom space in public schools:*

	Political Viability	Economic Feasibility	General Effectiveness	Capability
Option 2: Stop using child care center classrooms	NO	YES	NO	YES

Using the grant money to add more classroom space in public schools will increase the amount of students attending pre-k programs. This would also ensure that these pre-k students will be provided free meals through the CEP. There would no longer be the issue of having to deal with the food concerns associated with putting pre-k programs in classrooms at child care centers.

However, this recommendation would basically end diverse delivery throughout the state. It would not be an effective way to promote unification among schools and child care centers. There would be a decrease in collaboration efforts between organizations and communities. There also would not be any more concrete academic

standards and teacher qualifications that child care centers and districts would follow together. Additionally, this option is not politically viable. One reason why Louisiana received the federal expansion grant money was because of the childhood networks created throughout the state. This option would eliminate some of the need for these networks. Louisiana legislators would not be in favor of that. The idea of placing pre-k programs in child care centers was to not only increase the amount of pre-k seats available, but also to improve efficiency and effectiveness in Louisiana’s early childhood education system.

Moreover, child care centers have many benefits that a regular public school does not provide. For example, child care centers offer before and after care services. A child attending pre-k in a child care center could use these services offered, and limit the need for parents to find babysitters and seek extra help when they are already low-income. I do not think it is a good idea to simply end diverse delivery because of a small food alignment issue.

*3. School district are in charge of bringing CEP meals to the childcare centers:*

	Political Viability	Economic Feasibility	General Effectiveness	Capability
Option 2: Bring CEP meals to child care centers	YES	NO	YES	NO

Another option could be to only implement CEP in the child care centers for the children attending the public pre-k program. This option comes from the belief that it is not the child care centers responsibility to provide lunch to these specific students. The parents would not have to fill out any extra applications to receive CACFP because they are already qualified for CEP. This means someone from the school district will have to come to these child care centers and give the CEP breakfast and lunch to only the students attending the child care center specifically for the pre-k program. These students would be on a separate plan than the rest of the kids attending the child care center. All the other students attending would be under CACFP if the center has it.

The main issues I see with this option is the logistical challenges and economic feasibility associated with it. I am not sure the school district would be willing or capable to send someone to all the child care centers just to provide meals because the CEP and CACFP are not aligned. Even if they are responsible academically for the children in the pre-k classrooms, it seems from my interviews conducted that school districts do not want to be responsible for providing food as well. It also places another economic burden on the school districts because they will need to pay for someone to bring the meals from the schools to the child care centers.



**V. Recommendation:**

*Option 4. Grants can only be given to child care centers that have CACFP AND all pre-k children that are enrolled in districts that have CEP would automatically qualify for a free lunch under CACFP:*

	Political Viability	Economic Feasibility	General Effectiveness	Capability
<p>Option 4: Grants should only be given to child care centers that have CACFP</p> <p>AND</p> <p>all pre-k children that are enrolled in districts that have CEP would automatically qualify for a free meal under CACFP</p>	YES	YES	YES	YES

I believe the best option would be to slightly reform diverse delivery and the CEP/CACFP alignment. First, I recommend that all child care centers that want to participate in the expansion grant and diverse delivery be required to have CACFP. This makes sense politically and economically. This is because the option would eliminate child care centers having to pay completely out of pocket for the pre-k students attending the classrooms in the center. For example, because the Majestic Youth Development

does not have CACFP, they should not be able to participate in diverse delivery. I think this ultimately benefits them because the children that would have attended the public pre-k program would have attended the center for free. The Majestic Youth Development would have to pay for those meals out of pocket, which they are already currently doing.

To solve the alignment concerns between the two federal food programs, I also recommend making a Louisiana statewide rule that pre-k students in school districts that have CEP would also be automatically eligible for a free lunch through CACFP in centers located in the same district. Aligning the food programs this way is an effective strategy to eliminate the need for parents to fill out additional paperwork for their child to participate in CACFP because it will be already known that these children qualify for free meals. Moreover, it would not put an extra burden on the center because they will get reimbursed by the federal government at the free rate for these additional children. Diverse delivery will also be able to continue and further promote the idea of collaboration and quality pre-k programs in Louisiana. I think these two options done together is the best recommendation available. It fits the four criteria, and will solve the food alignment problems in Louisiana.

### **VIII. Further Research:**

After reviewing the extent of the alignment problem in Monroe City, I think further analysis should be done on the entire state of Louisiana. I believe expanded research should be done in the five other parishes that received expansion grant money. It would be interesting to see how many child care centers in those five parishes received the expansion grant money to participate in diverse delivery, and if they are experiencing the same problems as the child care centers in Monroe City.

Also, research should be done to see if the scope of the problem exists beyond Louisiana. I think we should look to see if other states have had similar problems arise after receiving the federal expansion grants. If other states promoted diverse delivery, they could be experiencing issues aligning CEP and CACFP as well. Further research should be done to see if public pre-k classrooms are being put in child care centers in districts that have CEP. I believe the best place to start is to contact agencies from the thirteen states that received the expansion grant money. If there is a growing concern in the child care centers throughout the United States, perhaps an act by Congress is not out of line.

## **X. Conclusion:**

This paper is a comprehensive research effort and analysis on the current food problems in Louisiana pre-k programs through the expansion grant and diverse delivery services. Students that attend pre-k programs in child care centers through diverse delivery do not get the same lunch benefits as students that attend pre-k in schools. This is because CEP is offered to students in schools, which gives free lunch to everyone. Even if pre-k students who attend child care centers are enrolled through the district, they do not have the ability to participate in the CEP. Therefore, child care centers are responsible for providing food to these children. There needs to be a way for CEP and CACFP to be aligned. Pre-k students attending child care centers through the expansion grant in a school district that has CEP should be provided with free meals. It should not be the responsibility of the child care center to collect extra paper work from the parents to enroll the pre-k students in CACFP.

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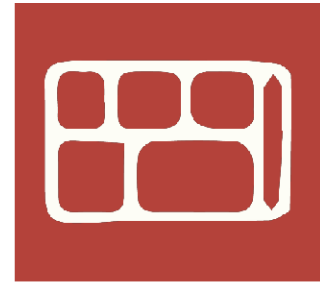
## IX. Appendices

### Appendix A:

# NEW THIS YEAR: SCHOOL BREAKFAST & LUNCH FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are committed to providing every student in our school community with all the tools they need to succeed, including nutritious meals that everyone can enjoy together. That is why we are excited to announce that this year, we are using a new school meal program option to offer school breakfast and lunch every day to all students at no charge. All children enrolled in our school can eat for free and there is no application required!



I am writing to share with you this exciting news and to ask that you help us ensure our meal program is a success by having your child participate in school breakfast and lunch every single school day. It is important that everyone participate in our universal meal program because...

**Part of what makes a great school culture is everyone sharing the same meal together.**

When all of our students are eating the same meals together, our cafeteria will become a place to learn more about new foods together, make healthy choices, and fuel up for learning and play.

**Participation in school breakfast and lunch helps your school and your community.**

The more students who participate in school lunch and breakfast, the more money our school receives in federal reimbursement for meals served. More money coming into our meal program allows us to purchase more fresh and nutritious foods, while securing the financial stability of our school meal program.

**Participation in school breakfast and lunch helps your family.**

Participating in school breakfast and lunch helps provide nutritious food for your children at school so they can concentrate better and learn more, and saves you valuable time and money at home.

I hope you will join me and the school community in supporting this exciting new program by participating in school breakfast and lunch this year. Please feel free to contact the school with any questions and to discuss any special dietary needs.

Sincerely,

FOR ASSISTANCE CONTACT:

This institution is an equal opportunity provider of USDA Child Nutrition Programs



## Appendix B:

### Income Eligibility Guidelines

Effective July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

THE FOLLOWING HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND INCOME STANDARDS ARE USED TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	YEARLY		MONTHLY		TWICE PER MONTH		EVERY TWO WEEKS		WEEKLY	
	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced
1	15,301	21,775	1,276	1,815	638	908	589	838	295	419
2	20,709	29,471	1,726	2,456	863	1,228	797	1,134	399	567
3	26,117	37,167	2,177	3,098	1,089	1,549	1,005	1,430	503	715
4	31,525	44,863	2,628	3,739	1,314	1,870	1,213	1,726	607	863
5	36,933	52,559	3,078	4,380	1,539	2,190	1,421	2,022	711	1,011
6	42,341	60,255	3,529	5,022	1,765	2,511	1,629	2,318	815	1,159
7	47,749	67,951	3,980	5,663	1,990	2,832	1,837	2,614	919	1,307
8	53,157	75,647	4,430	6,304	2,215	3,152	2,045	2,910	1,023	1,455
<i>For each Household member add:</i>	5,408	7,696	451	642	226	321	208	296	104	148

## Appendix C:

Dear Participant or Adult Family Member or Guardian:

Our center has been approved for participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP reimburses the center for the partial cost of meals. Participation in the CACFP enables us to keep our fees lower as well as serve nutritious meals to participants in our program.

**The participant/adult family member/guardian must complete Parts 1 and 4 and one of the following options: Part 2, Part 3A or Part 3B, to determine the amount of CACFP funds the center will be eligible to receive. This form will be placed in our files and treated as confidential information. Note: no white out or erasure should be used. If there is an error cross through, correct, and initial.**

### Part 1 PARTICIPANT:

- **PARTICIPANT'S NAME:** List the first and last name of participant.
- **DATE OF BIRTH:** List participant's date of birth.
- **ETHNICITY/RACE:** Using the codes provided, enter the codes for ethnicity and race.

### Part 2 FOR A HOUSEHOLD RECEIVING BENEFITS FROM THE FOOD ASSISTANCE (FA), TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES (TAF), FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS (FDPIR), SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) OR MEDICAID:

- Complete Parts 1, 2 and 4 on the reverse side.
- Provide the name and case number for the program from which benefits are received.

### Part 3A FOR A HOUSEHOLD EXCEEDING THE INCOME GUIDELINES LISTED ON THE CHART BELOW:

- Complete Parts 1, 3A and 4 on the reverse side.

#### TO CALCULATE ANNUAL INCOME

Weekly Income X 52 • Every 2 Weeks Income X 26 • Twice a Month Income X 24 • Monthly Income X 12

Household Size:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Each Additional Family Member
Annual Income:	\$21,775	\$29,471	\$37,167	\$44,863	\$52,559	\$60,255	\$67,951	+ \$7,696

### Part 3B FOR ALL OTHER HOUSEHOLDS:

- Complete Parts 1, 3B and 4 on the reverse side using the additional information below.
- **HOUSEHOLD NAMES:** Write the names of everyone in the household. Include participant, participant's spouse, and/or any other individuals who reside with the participant and depend on the participant for economic support. Functionally impaired adults living with their parents are considered a "family" separate from their parents.
- **GROSS INCOME BEFORE DEDUCTIONS:** Write the amount of income each person gets on the same line as their name. Use the appropriate column(s): Earnings from Work, Welfare/Child Support/Alimony, Pensions/Retirement/Social Security or Other Income (see list below). Next to the amount of income write how often the income was received. Income is all money before taxes or anything else is taken out. If a person does not have income, check the box for zero income.
  - **OTHER INCOME:** strike benefits, unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, disability benefits, interest/dividends, cash withdrawn from savings, income from estates/trusts/investments, royalties/annuities/rental income, regular contributions from person not living in the household.
  - **MILITARY HOUSING BENEFITS:** Report off-base housing allowance as income. If the housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include as income.
  - **SELF-EMPLOYMENT:** Report income derived from the business venture less operating costs for net income. The loss from the business cannot be deducted from a positive income earned in other employment. The least possible income is zero.
- **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:** Write the last four (4) digits of the social security number of the participant or adult family member or guardian who signs the forms. If the participant or adult family member or guardian does not have a social security number, check the box. Use of this information is for CACFP use only and is required.

### Part 4 SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Sign and date the application. The form must be signed by the participant or an adult family member or guardian.
- Complete the contact information – name, address, telephone number, and employer information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.inlake@usda.gov](mailto:program.inlake@usda.gov). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Appendix C Continued:

## ENROLLMENT AND INCOME ELIGIBILITY FORM FOR ADULT DAY CARE CENTERS JULY 1, 2015 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2016

**Part 1. PARTICIPANT: Complete the participant's name, date of birth, ethnicity and race.**

		<b>Ethnicity/Race*</b>	
<b>Last Name, First Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Race</b>

\*Ethnicity (select one): H=Hispanic or Latino or N=Not Hispanic or Latino

\*Race (select one or more): W=White, B=Black or African American, I=American Indian or Alaskan Native, A=Asian, or P=Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

**Part 2. HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING BENEFITS FROM THE FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAP), TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES (TAF), FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS (FDPIR), SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI), OR MEDICAID: Complete Parts 1, 2 and 4.**

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Case No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3A. HOUSEHOLDS EXCEEDING THE INCOME GUIDELINES: Complete Parts 1, 3A and 4.**

If your family income exceeds the income guidelines (listed on reverse side), check this box

**Part 3B. ALL OTHER HOUSEHOLDS – If you do not have a FAP, TAF, FDPIR, SSI or Medicaid case number, complete Parts 1, 3B and 4.**

List the Names of All Household Members not listed in Part 1	GROSS INCOME BEFORE ANY DEDUCTIONS (Net for Self Employed)								Check if ZERO income
	Earnings from Work		Welfare, Child Support, Alimony		Pensions, Retirement, Social Security		All Other Income		
	How much?	How often?	How much?	How often?	How much?	How often?	How much?	How often?	
<i>(Example) Jane Smith</i>	\$200	W	\$150	2M	\$100	M			<input type="checkbox"/>
1									<input type="checkbox"/>
2									<input type="checkbox"/>
3									<input type="checkbox"/>
4									<input type="checkbox"/>

Social Security Number of Household Member who signs form:

Last four digits of Social Security Number: XXX – XX - \_\_\_\_\_ If you do not have a Social Security Number, check this box

Privacy Act Statement: The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this meal benefit form. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve the participant for free or reduced price meals. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The social security number is not required when you list a Food Assistance Program (FAP), Temporary Assistants for Families (TAF) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) case number for the participant or other (FDPIR) identifier, SSI or Medicaid identification number for the participant receiving meal benefits or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if the participant is eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the CACFP.

**Part 4. SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

*I certify that all information on this form is true and that all income is reported. I understand that the facility will receive Federal funds based on the information I give. I understand that CACFP officials may verify the information. I understand that if I purposely give false information, the participant receiving meals may lose their meal benefits, and I may be prosecuted.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant or Adult Family Member or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Employer(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR CENTER USE ONLY**

\_\_\_\_ FAP/TAF/FDPIR/SSI/MEDICAID HOUSEHOLD

\_\_\_\_ Homeless Documentation from school, emergency shelter, or agency

\_\_\_\_ ANNUAL INCOME: \_\_\_\_\_ HOUSEHOLD SIZE: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>HOUSEHOLD CATEGORY:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Free <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced Price <input type="checkbox"/> Paid
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sponsor's Determining Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sponsor's Confirming Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix D:

## Child Care Meal Pattern

<b>Lunch or Supper</b> Select All Four Components for a Reimbursable Meal			
<b>Food Components</b>	<b>Ages 1-2</b>	<b>Ages 3-5</b>	<b>Ages 6-12<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>1 milk<sup>2</sup></b> fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
<b>2 fruits/vegetables</b> juice, <sup>3</sup> fruit and/or vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
<b>1 grains/bread<sup>4</sup></b> bread or cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or cold dry cereal or hot cooked cereal or pasta or noodles or grains	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
<b>1 meat/meat alternate</b> meat or poultry or fish <sup>5</sup> or alternate protein product or cheese or egg or cooked dry beans or peas or peanut or other nut or seed butters or nuts and/or seeds <sup>6</sup> or yogurt <sup>7</sup>	1 oz. 1 oz. 1 oz. 1/2 1/4 cup 2 Tbsp. 1/2 oz. 4 oz.	1½oz. 1½ oz. 1½ oz. 3/4 3/8 cup 3 Tbsp. 3/4 oz. 6 oz.	2 oz. 2 oz. 2 oz. 1 1/2 cup 4 Tbsp. 1 oz. 8 oz.

<sup>1</sup> Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

<sup>2</sup> Milk served must be low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) for children ages 2 years and older and adults.

<sup>3</sup> Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength.

<sup>4</sup> Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

<sup>5</sup> A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

<sup>6</sup> Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch or supper requirement.

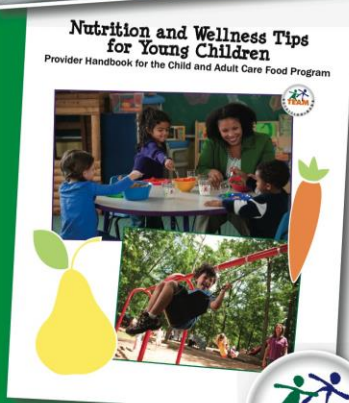
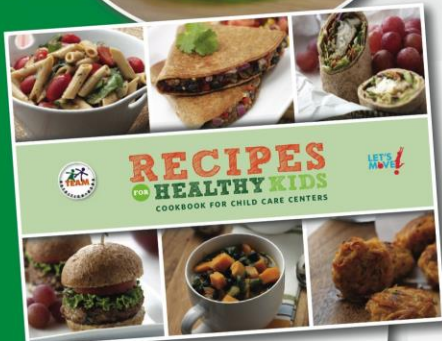
<sup>7</sup> Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

## Appendix E:



United States Department of Agriculture

# The USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



Join the thousands of child care centers and family child care providers already reaping the benefits of CACFP!

### All this ...

- Meal Reimbursement
- Free Resources
- Training and Guidance
- Networking Opportunities
- Links to Best Practices
- On-Site Assistance
- Messages for Parents

*... and more!*

### Program information:

USDA Food and Nutrition Service

[www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program)

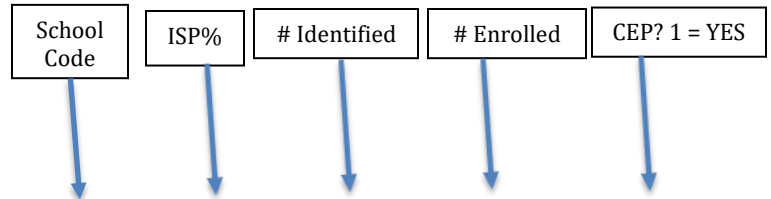
or call 866-USDA-CND (866-873-2263)

### Resource information:

USDA Team Nutrition

[www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition)

**Appendix F:**



065	Monroe City School Board					
	Carroll High School	065002	69.01%	354	513	1
	Carroll Junior High School	065003	78.73%	211	268	1
	Carver Elementary School	065004	85.02%	352	414	1
	J.S. Clark Elementary School	065005	54.70%	256	468	1
	Barkdull Faulk Elementary School	065006	98.15%	266	271	1
	Clara Hall Accelerated School	065007	82.01%	269	328	1
	Sallie Humble Elementary School	065008	43.47%	223	513	1
	Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School	065009	76.92%	200	260	1
	Berg Jones Elementary School	065010	84.70%	393	464	1
	Robert E. Lee Junior High School	065011	40.59%	194	478	1
	Lexington Elementary School	065012	43.58%	251	576	1
	Lincoln Elementary School	065013	84.81%	363	428	1
	Neville High School	065014	34.20%	316	924	1
	Minnie Ruffin Elementary School	065015	71.53%	407	569	1
	Wossman High School	065018	64.96%	367	565	1
	Sherrouse School	065023	71.59%	63	88	1
	Cypress Point Elementary School	065024	63.81%	268	420	1
	Madison James Foster Elementary School	065026	88.37%	380	430	1
	Thomas Jefferson Elementary	065028	82.89%	247	298	1
	Cluster 1 Total		65.02%	5380	8275	
	System-Wide Total		65.02%	5380	8275	