



Dear Families,

If you have been watching the news you may have caught information regarding school meals. The information can be confusing and conflicting, so I want you to understand the facts and impact it has on the Huntingdon Area School District.

- **ALL students in the district will have free breakfast for the 2023-24 school year.** This was made possible by the State budget.
- The National School Lunch Program has expanded free meals to more children due to a change in eligibility determined by them. **Students identified as eligible for reduced-price lunches will NOT be charged for meals at all buildings.**
- It is important to **fill out the free and reduced paperwork forms as the eligibility numbers have changed** and families who did not qualify previously may do so now. Please complete these when you receive them with the back to school paperwork for your students.
- Filling out the required paperwork for free or reduced lunches helps determine our eligibility for other potential programs as well, now and into the future. Please take the time to do this paperwork even if you are not eligible.
- The United States Department of Agriculture offers a program called Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This would allow all children in a school to receive free meals. Schools and Districts with a minimum Identified Student Percentage of identified students for free meals that is greater than ≥ 40 percent could consider enrolling in a CEP program. A conversion factor is then applied and you get a CEP percentage. Schools who are over 80% are then invited to apply by the Department of Education.

Current Numbers for the district are the following:

	% Eligible	Conversion Factor	CEP %
MS	44.93%	1.6	71.88%
HS	39.33%	1.6	62.93%
SS	43.45%	1.6	69.52%
ST	58.12%	1.6	92.99%
Dist.	46.04%	1.6	73.66%



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As you can see several of our schools meet the eligibility criteria to be considered. However only one of our schools, Standing Stone Elementary, is above the 80% threshold. Our overall district combined percentage is 73.6%. **Standing Stone Elementary was the only school invited by the Department of Education at this time to join the CEP pilot program. The board approved the invitation for the pilot for Standing Stone. The district did not choose to exclude other buildings on our own accord, but are simply following guidelines.** So, only Standing Stone Elementary students will receive free lunches on the CEP program.

- The numbers can be reviewed annually and eligibility could change for any one of our schools. We will monitor and take full advantage of any options that become available to us.
- Free breakfast and lunch for students is a political topic federally and at the state level. We, as a community, can continue to advocate and let our government representation know our community could use support for all children, not just buildings or groups of students who might follow under the current guidelines.

Jennifer Mitchell
Superintendent