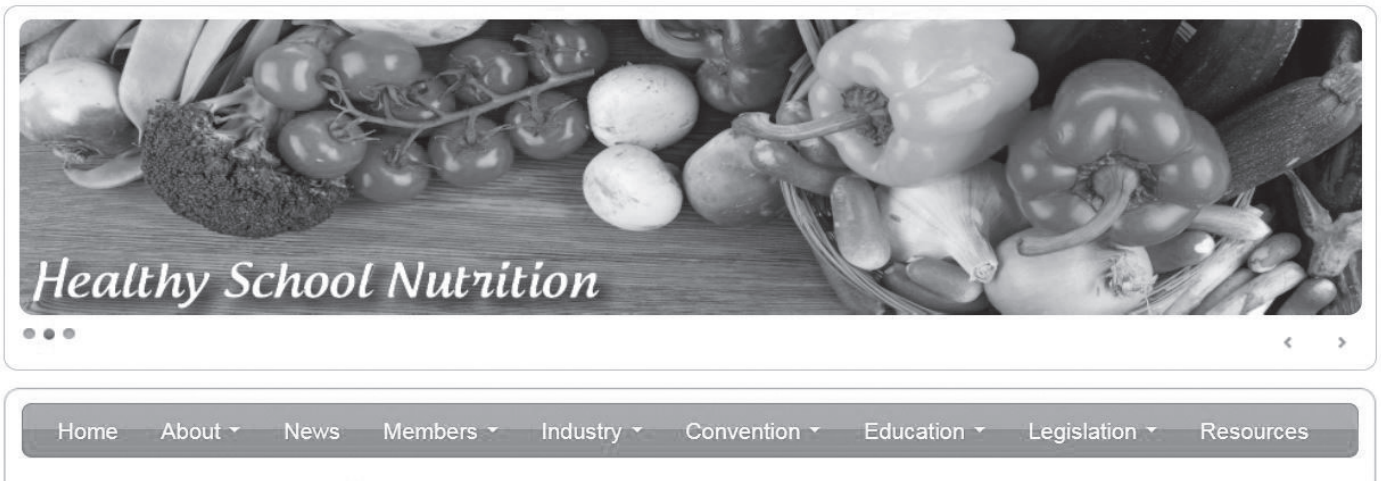


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Calling All Interested Historians: CNP Through the Decades - Part 5

The school lunch program began expanding at a rapid rate between the time it was permanently authorized in 1946 until 1968 where we are now in the history. We started with 4.5 million students in 1946 and by 1968 we have 18.9 million children participating. Federal support grew from \$60 million to \$160 million and commodity support went from \$8 million to nearly \$276 million. 12% of lunches were provided free or at a reduced price. This growth generated public interest in and concern over funding. The fact that only 73% of the 50.7 million enrolled students had access to the program meant it was bound to grow again as more schools came into the program. For various reasons such as no cooking facility in the schools, inadequate funding at the federal, state and local level and administrator's feelings that feeding students is a parental responsibility, not an educational responsibility were the source of concern. The net result is that the neediest students had to do without access to school lunch. The findings of a committee on School Lunch participation published in "Their Daily Bread" in April 1968 showed that only 4% of students are able to get free or reduced price lunches. Also in April, 1968 the Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and

Malnutrition in the United States revealed its findings in a paperback book titled "Hunger USA". The Board found evidence of chronic hunger and malnutrition in every part of the United States. The estimate was 10 million persons in 280 counties. A CBS television documentary in May 1968 portrayed extreme poverty and the need for free and reduced price lunches for hungry children from families living below the poverty level. Concern rose to an unprecedented level among the public, the congress and the president.

On May 6, 1969, President Nixon sent a message to congress making recommendations for action by congress and governmental agencies to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and to insure a healthy diet for all Americans. The Food and Nutrition Service was created as a new agency within the Department of Agriculture.

On December 2, 1969, the President addressed the first, one and only White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health. Various panels of the White House Conference recommended expansion of the school lunch

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program to the extent that every school child shall have the lunch available to him or her, and that every needy child shall be provided a lunch and breakfast free or at a reduced price when unable to pay the full price. The White House Conference members testified before the Senate Select Committee on Agriculture and that brought about new amendments to the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Acts which were enacted on July 1, 1970. The recommendations from the Conference were as follows:

- 1) The Nutritive content of the meal must meet 1/3 of the child's daily nutritional requirements containing all the elements of a balanced meal.
- 2) Through federal, state and local support, the price of the meal will be within the ability of most children to pay.
- 3) By federal regulations, children who are unable to pay the full price must be provided a lunch at a free or reduced price.
- 4) The menu is devised to provide extensive latitude to schools in planning the meal as long as it meets the nutritional requirements with a wide variety of foods for students to choose.
- 5) Even though the meal pattern takes into account local food preferences, it is a great opportunity to introduce new foods to students.
- 6) The day to day participation in the program develops good food habits that will carry on through adulthood and into the community.
- 7) Properly coordinated with classrooms, the lunchrooms can be a laboratory for actual experience in the principles of nutrition, sanitation, safety, personal hygiene, food service management, courtesy and social graces, budgeting, accounting, food storage and handling, food preservation, delivery systems and many other subjects important to society.

The 91st congress took action to accomplish the recommendations of the White House Conference by amending Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act to

establish uniform national guidelines and criteria in the determination of eligibility and set a maximum charge of .20 for lunches served at a reduced price.

For the first time on July 1, 1970, the Secretary of USDA issued the income poverty guidelines for the 1970-71 school year for 49 states and the District of Columbia. Alaska and Hawaii were stated separately. Under the first poverty guidelines a family of 4 with an income of \$3,720 or less annually would be eligible for free or reduced price lunches in participating schools. The Secretary imposed upon each State agency special responsibilities for informing schools of their obligation to provide free and reduced price lunches and breakfasts to students who are unable to pay the full price. Each LEA was required to submit the policy criteria to the state agency which would determine the eligibility of all students for free or reduced price meals.

At a minimum the policy had to include the following:

- 1) The official to whom authority would be delegated for determining the eligibility of students.
- 2) Criteria involving income, including welfare payments, family size, number of children which would be used to determine eligibility.
- 3) Procedures for appealing the decision plus assurance that the Board of Education would abide by the procedure.
- 4) Procedures the board would use in accepting applications for free or reduced price meals and alternative methods it intended to use.
- 5) Description of the systems to be used in collecting payments from children that would fully protect the anonymity of those receiving free or reduced price meals.
- 6) The board was obligated to notify parents of the eligibility standards and policy adopted.
- 7) The board was required to publicly announce the policy and criteria through information media.

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8) The notice to parents had to be accompanied by the application form to be used.

9) The final deadline for filing the policy and criteria acceptable to the state agency was set for December 30, 1970.

In addition to the policy and criteria, schools were required to give assurance to the state agency that the names of students receiving free and/or reduced price meals would not be published, posted or announced in any way and that such students would not be required in any way to use a separate lunchroom, go through a separate serving line, enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance, eat lunch at a different time from paying students, work for their meals, use a different medium of exchange in the lunchroom than paying students or be offered a different meal than the paying students.

In addition there are a huge amount of regulations placed on the program that we will look at in Part 6 of the “Child

Nutrition Programs Throughout the Decades” in the Summer edition of the Serving Spoon Magazine.

Again, I wish to credit and thank Gordon W. Gunderson for his extensive study and documentation of the Child Nutrition Programs history; Robert Hunter who wrote the book entitled “Poverty” and this time I used a paperback book titled “Hunger USA” published in April 1968 by the Citizens’ Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States; as well as the federal register which I always use to develop these articles.

I hope that I will see many of you at the MdSNA Legislative Action Conference on March 12, 2020, starting in Annapolis, Maryland then traveling by bus to Washington, DC.

Have a very happy Spring! See you soon.

Mary Klatko, MdSNA Webmaster