

Child Hunger Alliance - Yavapai

Free/Reduced Cost School Meals in Yavapai County - 2013



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ENDING CHILD HUNGER IN YAVAPAI COUNTY

The Child Hunger Alliance created an action plan to reduce child hunger in Yavapai County beginning in 2013. This report is the third in a series that started with the initial study, *Ending Child Hunger in Yavapai County, 2012*. These reports provide updates about the status of child nutrition and hunger in our county. Each report evaluates progress achieved through various community programs. This report focuses on the Child Nutrition Initiative led by the Yavapai Food Council.

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FINDINGS

This report updates data about the prevalence and severity of child hunger in Yavapai County based on the number of children receiving free/reduced cost meals at school in October 2013, the latest available data reported by the Arizona Department of Education. The findings of this report:

- In October 2013, 54 district and charter schools provided free/reduced cost meals out of a total of 81 schools listed by the Yavapai County School Superintendent's Office. This amounts to **67%** of public schools in the county that offer school meals.

- ❖ In October 2013, **33%** of public schools did **not** offer free/reduced cost meals to students.
- ❖ The 27 schools that did *not* offer free/reduced meals consist of five district schools and 22 charter schools.
- ❖ The percentage of students receiving free/reduced meals increased from 55.7% in 2011 to **56.5%** in 2013.
- ❖ The **top ten schools** with high percentages of free/reduced meals schools ranged from 95% to 79% of enrollment consisting of students qualified for free/reduced cost meals.
- ❖ Paulden Community School, a charter school, has the *highest* percentage (95%) of 147 students receiving free/reduced meals.. Lake Valley Elementary School has the *lowest* percentage (79%) with 365 students receiving free/reduced meals.
- ❖ The goal of providing school meals to food-insecure students is best achieved when **all such students** receive nourishing meals at school in addition to what they receive at home. Schools and supportive community organizations can measure their success by *increasing the number* of students who receive free/reduced cost meals.
- ❖ Among the top ten schools, the total number of free/reduced cost meal students **increased** from 2,559 in 2011 to 2,827 in 2013, an *increase* of 268 students or 10% over two years.
- ❖ When one charter school engages a federal meals program, Yavapai County gains a continuing economic stimulus of roughly **\$130,000 per school year**.
- ❖ The Yavapai Food Council has accepted the challenge posed by the Child Hunger Alliance to implement the Child Nutrition Initiative to fill school and child care meal gaps through better utilization of federal meals programs.

FREE/REDUCED COST MEALS

One of the most reliable indicators of *child hunger* is the number of children in school whose parents qualify for Free/Reduced Cost Meals. A family qualifies on the basis of low income, which allows the school to receive federal reimbursement for the meals it serves to the family's one or more children. Based on the number of qualified students, a school may apply for and receive several federally funded meals programs.

An earlier report, *Access to School Meals in Yavapai County, 2013*, surveyed all of the public schools in Yavapai County to identify the federally funded meals they offered and *meal gaps* where a school could but did not offer meals. As a result of that report, the Yavapai Food Council started its Child Nutrition Initiative to encourage and assist schools and child care centers with meal gaps in adding meals for food-insecure children.

This report deals with the most recent count of the number of students receiving free/reduced cost meals produced by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). ADE requires public schools to make their counts in October near the start of the school year and also in March before the school year ends. It takes ADE three to four months to compile the data by school district and individual schools.

The October 2013 count offers the most recent data for evaluating the prevalence of child hunger among school age children. This report presents that data and compares it with October 2011 data to identify trends in the *numbers* of qualified students in each school. It also compiles lists of schools with the highest *percentages* of qualified students to guide community efforts in assisting schools in providing meals and filling meal gaps.

The Table 1 shows the number and percentage for each public school in the county.

Table 1

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
State Percent Eligible for Free Reduced Meals 57.67%					
Sponsor Name	Site Name	Enrollment	F/R Students	Percent Eligible	Sponsor Percent
Acorn Montessori Charter School	Acorn Montessori Charter School	280	207	73.9%	
Acorn Montessori Charter School	Acorn Montessori Charter School, Inc. - West	212	133	62.7%	
Acorn Montessori Charter School					69.11%
Ash Fork Joint Unified District	Ash Fork Elementary School	246	138	55.9%	
Ash Fork Joint Unified District					55.92%

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
Bagdad Unified District	Bagdad Elementary School	313	166	53.0%	
Bagdad Unified District	Bagdad High School	125	50	40.0%	
Bagdad Unified District					49.32%
Beaver Creek Elementary District	Beaver Creek School	325	291	89.6%	
Beaver Creek Elementary District					89.62%
Camp Verde Unified District	Camp Verde Elementary School	759	600	79.1%	
Camp Verde Unified District	Camp Verde High School	421	246	58.4%	
Camp Verde Unified District	Camp Verde Middle School	324	237	73.1%	
Camp Verde Unified District					72.01%
Canon Elementary District	Canon School	134	99	73.9%	
Canon Elementary District					73.91%
Chino Valley Unified District	Chino Valley High School	765	388	50.8%	
Chino Valley Unified District	Del Rio Elementary School	695	453	65.2%	
Chino Valley Unified District	Heritage Middle School	704	417	59.3%	
Chino Valley Unified District	Territorial Elementary School	164	127	77.4%	
Chino Valley Unified District					59.53%
Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary District	Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary School	473	257	54.3%	
Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary District					54.33%

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
Congress Elementary District	Congress Elementary School	117	86	73.5%	
Congress Elementary District					73.50%
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	Cottonwood Elementary School	477	354	74.2%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	Cottonwood Middle School	550	359	65.3%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	Dr Daniel Bright Elementary School	493	383	77.7%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	Mountain View Preparatory School	444	203	45.7%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	New Visions Academy	44	36	81.8%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist	Oak Creek Elementary School	66	47	71.3%	
Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary Dist					66.99%
Humboldt Unified District	Bradshaw Mountain High School	1622	790	48.7%	
Humboldt Unified District	Bradshaw Mountain Middle School	316	199	63.1%	
Humboldt Unified District	Coyote Springs Elementary School	630	395	62.8%	
Humboldt Unified District	Glassford Hill Middle School	413	247	59.8%	
Humboldt Unified District	Granville Elementary School	571	294	51.5%	
Humboldt Unified District	Humboldt Elementary School	411	288	70.0%	
Humboldt Unified District	Lake Valley Elementary School	462	365	79.1%	

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
Humboldt Unified District	Liberty Traditional School	805	396	49.2%	
Humboldt Unified District	Mountain View Elementary School	577	466	80.7%	
Humboldt Unified District					59.26%
Kirkland Elementary District	Kirkland Elementary School	82	63	77.0%	
Kirkland Elementary District					77.03%
Mayer Unified School District	Mayer Elementary School	392	341	87.0%	
Mayer Unified School District	Mayer High School	190	158	83.2%	
Mayer Unified School District					85.74%
Mingus Mountain Academy	Mingus Mountain Academy	129	129	100.0%	
Mingus Springs Charter School	Mingus Springs Charter School	175	109	62.3%	
Mingus Springs Charter School					62.29%
Mingus Union High School District	Mingus Union High School	1256	613	48.8%	
Mingus Union High School District					48.81%
Prescott Unified District	Abia Judd Elementary School	562	140	24.9%	
Prescott Unified District	Granite Mountain Middle School	684	189	27.6%	
Prescott Unified District	Lincoln Elementary School	313	105	33.5%	
Prescott Unified District	Miller Valley School	308	260	84.4%	
Prescott Unified District	Prescott High School	1620	419	25.9%	

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
Prescott Unified District	Prescott Mile High Middle School	611	247	40.4%	
Prescott Unified District	Taylor Hicks School	506	215	42.5%	
Prescott Unified District	Washington Traditional School	276	163	59.1%	
Prescott Valley Charter School	Prescott Valley School	190	163	85.8%	
Prescott Valley Charter School					85.79%
Research Based Education Corporation	Paulden Community School	155	147	95.1%	
Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD #9	Big Park Community School	345	148	42.9%	
Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD #9	Sedona Red Rock High School	510	186	36.5%	
Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD #9	West Sedona Elementary School	423	265	62.6%	
Sedona-Oak Creek JUSD #9					46.87%
Seligman Unified District	Seligman High School	148	95	64.2%	
Seligman Unified District					64.19%
Skull Valley Elementary District	Skull Valley Elementary School	20	6	30.0%	
Skull Valley Elementary District					30.00%
Yarnell Elementary District	Yarnell Elementary School	32	24	75.0%	
Yarnell Elementary District					75.00%
Yavapai County Juvenile Detention	AOC-Yavapai County Juvenile Detention Center	28	28	100.0%	
Yavapai County Juvenile Detention					100.00%

2013 October Free & Reduced Meals					
	OCTOBER 2013 TOTALS:	22,893	12,932	56.5%	
	OCTOBER 2011 TOTALS:	23,208	12,919	55.7%	

In October 2013, 54 district and charter schools provided free/reduced cost meals out of a total of 81 schools listed by the Yavapai County School Superintendent's Office. This amounts to 67% of public schools in the county. The 27 schools that do *not* offer free/reduced meals consist of five district schools and 22 charter schools.

COMPARING 2011 AND 2013 MEALS

At the bottom of Table 1, we see total enrollment and total free/reduced numbers for October 2011 and October 2013. Over that two-year period, total school enrollment in the county *decreased* by 415 students, a 2% drop in the number of students. During the same period, the number of free/reduced meals students *decreased* by 16 students, a less than 1% drop. The number of free/reduced meal students decreased less than the number of enrolled students, and the percentage of free/reduced meals students rose from 55.7% in 2011 to 56.5% in 2013.

SCHOOLS WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGES

We offer Table 2 to those organizations that wish to address the needs of the top ten schools with the highest percentages of free/reduced meals students. Such increases may be due to several causes. This report does *not* attempt to identify those causes.

Table 2

Top Ten Schools - October 2013			
Rank	School	F/R Students	Percent of Enrollment
1	Paulden Community School	147	95%
2	Beaver Creek School	291	90%
3	Mayer Elementary School	341	87%
4	Prescott Valley School	163	86%
5	Miller Valley School	260	84%
6	Mayer High School	158	83%

Top Ten Schools - October 2013			
7	New Visions Academy	36	82%
8	Mountain View Elementary School	466	81%
9	Camp Verde Elementary School	600	79%
10	Lake Valley Elementary School	365	79%
	Total:	2827	

These schools range from 95% to 79% of enrollment consisting of students qualified for free/reduced cost meals. Paulden Community School, a charter school, has the highest percentage (95%) of students able to receive free/reduced meals, comprising 147 low-income students. Lake Valley Elementary School has the lowest percentage (79%).

These schools range from 600 to 36 students qualified for free/reduced cost meals. Camp Verde Elementary School has 600 students able to receive free/reduced meals, the highest number of low-income students among these top ten schools. New Visions Academy, a charter school, has the lowest number of free/reduced meals students (36).

The total number of free/reduced meals students amounts to 2,827 low-income students in these top ten schools. Community-based hunger relief organizations can focus supportive efforts on assisting any of these schools in developing additional meals.

Table 3 depicts the top ten schools with the highest percentages of free/reduced cost meal students in October 2011, two years prior to Table 2.

Table 3

Top Ten Schools - October 2011			
Rank	School	F/R Students	Percent of Enrollment
1	Mayer Elementary School	316	92%
2	Chester Newton Charter School	87	89%
3	Sunnyside Charter School	29	85%
4	Yarnell Elementary School	52	84%
5	Beaver Creek School	324	83%
6	Mayer Jr/Sr High School	133	83%

Top Ten Schools - October 2011			
7	Miller Valley Elementary School	276	82%
8	Lake Valley Elementary School	390	79%
9	Mountain View Elementary School	431	79%
10	Camp Verde Elementary School	521	77%
	Total:	2559	

These schools range from 92% to 77% of enrollment consisting of students qualified for free/reduced cost meals. Mayer Elementary School has the highest percentage (92%) of students able to receive free/reduced meals, comprising 316 low-income students. Camp Verde Elementary School has the lowest percentage (77%).

These schools range from 521 to 52 students qualified for free/reduced cost meals. Camp Verde Elementary School has 521 students able to receive free/reduced meals, the highest number of low-income students among these top ten schools. Yarnell Elementary, a charter school, has the lowest number of free/reduced meals students (36).

The total number of free/reduced meals students amounts to 2,559 low-income students in these top ten schools.

TRENDS FROM 2011 TO 2013

Comparing Tables 2 and 3 to identify trends, we find that the total number of free/reduced cost meal students increased from 2,559 in 2011 to 2,827 in 2013, an *increase* of 268 students or 10% over two years.

In the top ten rankings, Mayer Elementary School dropped from first place in 2011 to third place in 2013. Chester Newton Charter School fell off the chart, moving from second place in 2011 to going out of business in 2013. Sunnyside Charter School went from third place in 2011 to going out of business in 2013, according to the ADE report.

Paulden Community School, a charter school, was not listed in the top ten in 2011, yet went to first place ranking in 2013 with free/reduced meals students comprising 95% of enrollment. Beaver Creek School moved up from fifth place in 2011 to second place in 2013. Miller Valley School rose in rank from seventh place to fourth place in 2013.

While the overall trend of free/reduced cost meals for public schools in the county shows a continuing increase, two charter schools have gone out of business, making its increase appear less than it is.

DEFINING SUCCESS

The goal of providing school meals to food-insecure students is best achieved when *all* such students receive nourishing meals at school in addition to what they receive at home. Schools and supportive community organizations can measure their success by increasing the number of students who receive free/reduced cost meals.

Accomplishing this goal requires two steps: 1) Schools manage to qualify as many low-income students as possible for free/reduced cost meals; and 2) Schools and supportive community organizations manage to furnish as many school meals as possible. These necessary steps open the door for food-insecure students to receive adequate nutritious meals at school to counter the lack of nutritious meals at home.

Moreover, when a school starts a federal meals program it offers a vital *economic stimulus* to its community and the county.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Additional meals made available to low-income students act as an economic stimulus for the community served by a school. The economic stimulus involves starting a federal revenue stream that sustains itself. When a school enrolls in a new federally funded meals program administered by ADE, it receives federal funds to reimburse the school for the meals it provides. A school used those funds to purchase food from either local grocers or wholesale food distributors. Federally funded meals range from one to three meals per school day. Each meal must meet federal and state nutrition standards, and cost varies from breakfast to lunch to snacks.

The average cost of a school providing three meals a school day roughly amounts to \$5.00 per student. Adding one student to the free/reduced cost meal program produces \$5.00 per school day times 180 school days equals \$900 *revenue* per school year. A school spends that extra revenue to purchase food from its community.

In Yavapai County, a charter school has an average of 147 students. By assisting a charter school to start a federal meals program, it can receive \$5.00 times 147 students equals \$735 per school day. In one month the school pays local grocers \$735 times 23 school days per month

equals \$25,725 for food purchases. And in a school year of 180 school days, those school food purchases amount to \$132,300 for school meals.

When a charter school engages in a federal meal program, Yavapai County gains a continuing economic stimulus of roughly \$130,000 *per school year*. This boost to the county's economy also applies to rural schools and child care centers that do *not* offer federally funded meals. For the community and county, that meals program sustains itself through federal reimbursement of school costs, and that extra revenue continues year after year.

It is important to recognize that not only do food-insecure children receive nutritious meals that they might not be receiving at home, but also that local grocers gain a hefty ongoing boost in their retail sales.

FAMILY FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity at home is defined as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”¹

Home food insecurity increased markedly in Arizona and Yavapai County since the Great Recession of 2008-09, when businesses went bankrupt, jobs were lost, work hours were reduced, wages were lowered, and homes were lost. In 2010, Arizona had the second highest poverty rate of 21.8% in the nation, exceeded only by Mississippi.² Yavapai County's poverty rate has continued to rise from 12.0% in 2000 to 18.4% in 2011, a dramatic 53% rise.³

Those living in poverty have historically been composed of minority groups, the less-educated, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the elderly. Yet starting in 2008, the middle class also began sliding into poverty due to reduced income and depletion of savings. In 2010, 30% of persons waiting in line at a local food bank were still employed yet unable to financially take care of themselves or their family.⁴

The erosion of family income caused almost half of Arizona families to experience poverty for the first time. The Census Bureau reported that 39% of Arizona families were sliding

¹ Community Food Security Programs Improve Food Access,” Linda S. Kantor, Food Review, 2001.

² U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Data Report.

³ U.S. Census Bureau 2012 Report.

⁴ Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America, 2012.

into poverty in 2011.⁵ A U.S. Federal Reserve Bank study showed that the middle class of the nation had lost 40% of its wealth since the recession.⁶

In a depressed economy and experiencing state budget cutbacks from the Arizona State Legislature, district schools faced reductions in staff, and charter and small rural schools were subjected to even more severe cutbacks in their smaller budgets. At a time when the number of food-insecure students was expanding, these schools became less likely to start new meal programs. School boards and administrators focused on economic survival.

STUDENT MEAL GAPS

In 2013, Cornucopia Community Advocates conducted a survey of all public schools in Yavapai County and issued a report, *Access to School Meals in Yavapai County: Student Meal Gaps in District and Charter Schools*. The survey found 21 of 29 (79%) of charter schools offered *no* student meals and lacked certified kitchens. It identified 3 of 10 (33%) of small rural district schools that offered no student meals and lacked a certified kitchen.

Those 24 schools had *not* applied for federal meals programs for several reasons. The school administrator was typically overworked and felt overwhelmed in considering the prospect of applying for a federal meal program. A school's lack of kitchen facilities seemed a major obstacle. And in general, a school's financial resources were already stretched to the limit.

Based on the survey's recommendation that action was needed to engage schools and child care centers in federal meals programs, the Yavapai Food Council accepted the challenge.

DAILY DINER CATERING PROGRAM

Based on the survey's findings, the Yavapai Food Council (YFC) developed the Daily Diner program for assisting charter and small rural schools in adding federal meal programs. In this model, YFC trained its staff in all of the available federal food programs offered by ADE so that YFC could act as a consultant in helping willing schools overcome their obstacles and apply for one or more federal meal programs. YFC also developed a relationship with SW Food Service Excellence as a food service provider to cater meals to a newly participating school.

The Daily Diner program allows schools and child care centers that lack certified kitchens to receive federally funded meals through a catering service.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 Data Report.

⁶ "Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2007 to 2010, Federal Reserve Bulletin, June 2012.

As this report is being completed, the Yavapai Food Council is engaged in the ADE application process for a charter school to receive school lunches and for some summer camps to receive summer meals. During 2014, these programs will likely be implemented, and their performance will be evaluated to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to make improvements.

The Child Hunger Alliance will continue to promote the Child Nutrition Initiative to fill school and child care meal gaps through better utilization of federal meals programs.

