

# Universal School Meals/Act 64

## A Vermont Success Story

# Thank you, Legislators

for passing Act 64 –  
Vermont's Permanent  
Universal School Meals  
Program is an incredible  
success!

Overall, since Universal School Meals was first implemented, Student participation in school breakfast has increased **40%**, and student participation in school lunch has increased **29%**.

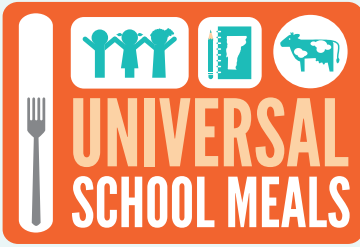
(2023 as compared to 2019)

- In 2023, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 64; after Governor Scott allowed the bill to pass into law without his signature, **Vermont became the sixth state to implement permanent Universal School Meals.**
- Overall nationally, breakfast and lunch participation DECLINED by over 7% in the most recent school year, but in Vermont, thanks to our Universal School Meals Program, **we continue to see significant gains in the number of students eating healthy universal school breakfast and lunch!**
  - Vermont ranked **2nd in the country** in terms of the greatest increases in school lunch participation (6.7%) in the 2022-23 school year (compared to the previous school year).
  - Vermont ranked **4th in the country** in terms of the greatest increases in school breakfast participation (7.6%) in the 2022-23 school year (compared to the previous school year)

**Vermont was one of only 6 states in which both breakfast and lunch participation increased all while costing 17% (\$6.5 million in returned Ed Fund dollars) less than what was appropriated.**

- **10,000 more students** have been accurately counted as low-income, bringing increased federal funding to school districts
- **80 newly eligible Vermont schools and communities** (and counting!) can provide free meals for all kids 0-18 after school and during the summer! Act 64 is helping these schools become newly eligible for the federal summer and after school nutrition programs, by helping to accurately count all low income students.





**Act 64 cost 17% (\$6.5 million in returned Ed Fund dollars) less than what was appropriated.**

*I want to say thank you in two ways. One as a single mother of a student in a Vermont public school but also as an educator in a public elementary school. From a parent's perspective, with costs going up but for the most part our wages remaining the same, knowing there are two free meals for my child five days a week has been a blessing. I don't have to stress about stretching funds for more food to pack a lunch and make breakfast... From an educators perspective... this helps with attention in class because they aren't being inattentive due to hunger, they can focus. They also in turn can depend on school as a safe place they know they will be able to have breakfast and lunch at.*

– J. Kage, Teacher and Parent

*The universal meals... that we were able to manage to let [students] eat and not have family income or [ability to pay] affect their access to a nutritious meal — This simple shift in viewing meals not as dollars but as a very real need in a rural area made a huge difference in our approach to food in general... No one wants to be the only one with a sandwich in the middle of the lunch line!*

– Lorelei Wheeler, School Administrator

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