

What the Data Shows About...

# Universal School Meals


in Vermont!

03/14/2023



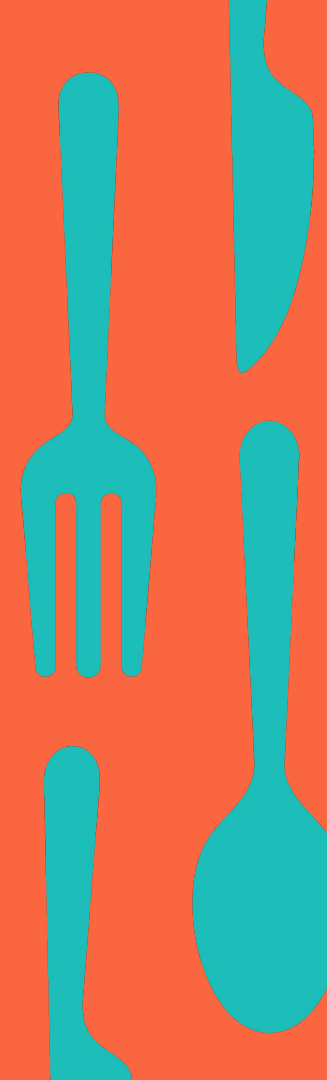
Every student. Every meal. Every school.

Anore Horton  
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802-231-1293



“ Kids come to school to learn,  
and I’ve experienced how  
hunger disrupts or even  
prevents a student from  
learning.”

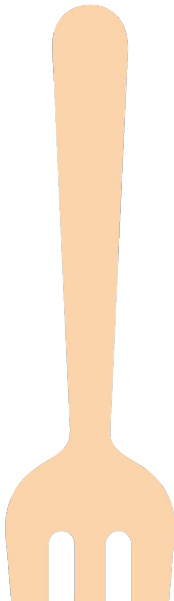

—Brittany Wood,  
5th Grade Teacher at Barre Town  
Middle & Elementary School





## What is the relationship between eligibility for school meals and families who can't afford to pay for school meals?

The income eligibility threshold for Free & Reduced Price Meals is ***less than half*** the income needed to meet basic needs in Vermont, according to JFO.



	<b><u>JFO basic needs budget</u></b>	<b><u>USDA cut-off for free or reduced-price school meals</u></b>	<b><u>% of JFO Basic Needs Threshold</u></b>
<b><u>2 parent, 2 child household</u></b>	<b>\$108,030</b>	<b>\$51,338</b>	<b>47.5%</b>
<b><u>1 parent, 2 child household</u></b>	<b>\$95,512</b>	<b>\$42,606</b>	<b>44.6%</b>



## What is the relationship between eligibility for school meals and families who can't afford to pay for school meals?

The Medicaid income threshold for children is 317% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and 68,000 children in Vermont are enrolled in Medicaid.

DVHA's Medicaid Direct Certification estimate tells us that more than **25,000 students** that are living in the income gap between eligibility for Medicaid and Free and Reduced Price Meals.

JFO's basic needs budget shows that the income needed to afford basic needs is even higher than eligibility for Medicaid for many families.



<b><u>Students in the Eligibility Gap</u></b>	<b>25,000+</b>
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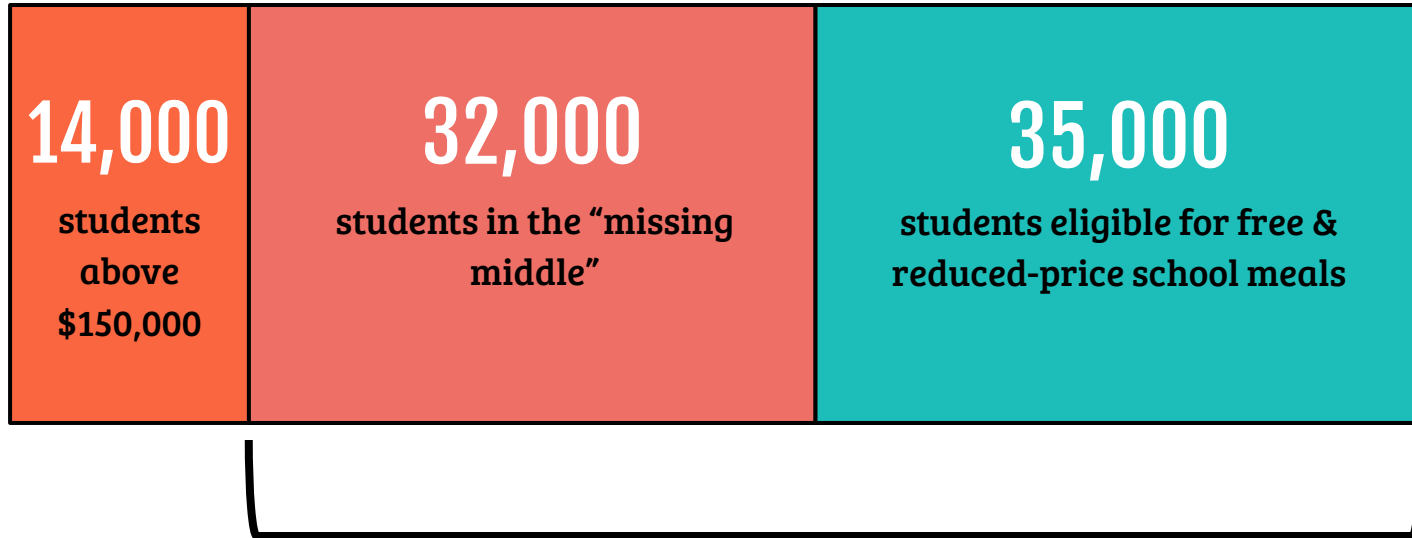
# “The Missing Middle”

The “missing-middle” kids, who are not eligible for free school meals, are the 2nd largest group of students; after Free & Reduced Price eligible kids

<b>Vermont School Age Children by Household Income Group</b>		
<b>Household Income Bracket</b>	<b>Number of School Age Children</b>	<b>Percentage of School Age Children</b>
\$0-\$50,000	24,415	27.4%
\$50,000-\$100,000	28,772	32.2%
\$100,000-\$150,000	20,654	23.1%
\$150,000-\$200,000	6,351	7.1%
\$200,000-\$250,000	3,901	4.4%
\$250,000-\$300,000	1,286	1.4%
\$300,000+	3,873	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,252</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data from 2021 Vermont ACS 5-Year Estimates

# “The Missing Middle”

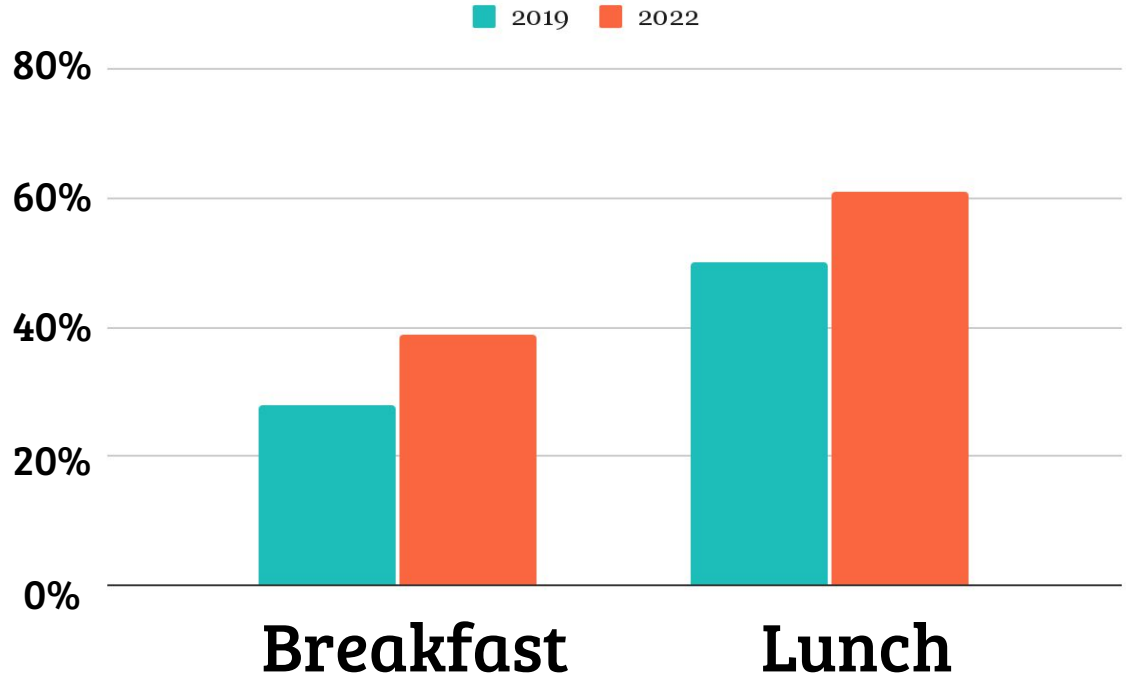


**83%**

Of all students in Vermont are living in households whose income is below \$150,000.

# School Meal Participation

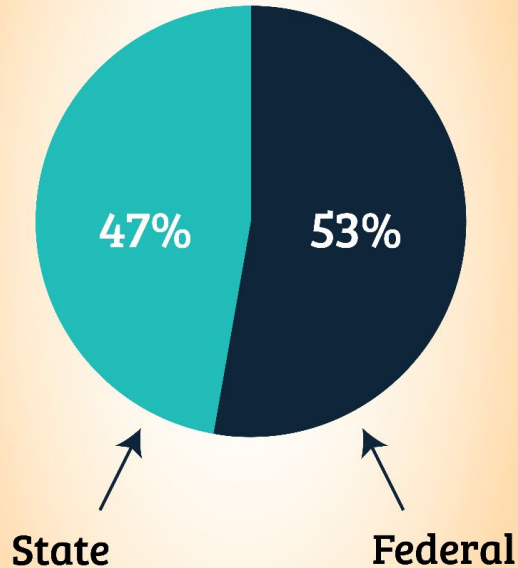
2019 vs. 2022



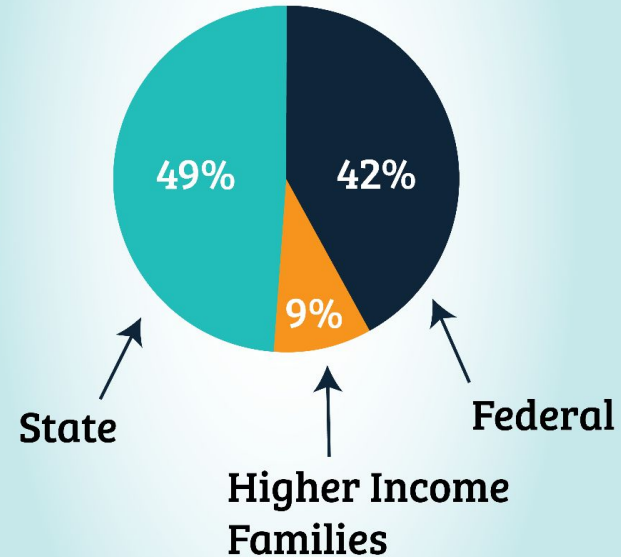
# Universal School Meals = More Federal Funds

## Having Higher Income Families Pay Costs VT More to Feed Fewer Kids

### UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS



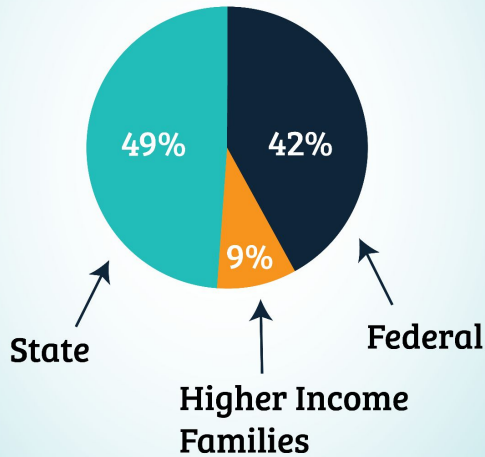
### FAMILIES WITH INCOMES OVER \$150,000 PAY FOR MEALS





# Making Higher Income Families Pay = VT Pays More to Feed Fewer Kids

## FAMILIES WITH INCOMES OVER \$150,000 PAY FOR MEALS



VT school meal programs lose \$4-4.75 million a year in federal funds

Participation drops by 33% for Breakfast, and 20% for lunch.

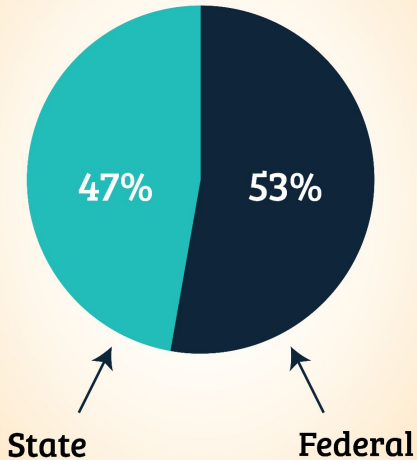
Cash registers are required in the cafeteria.

Each meal costs a school on average an extra \$0.63 to make.

School meal program debt and debt collection returns; administrative burden increases

# Universal School Meals = More Federal Funds

UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS



Participation rises for students from all income levels, but it rises most for low-income students and those in the “missing middle.”

Cash registers are eliminated from the cafeteria.

Schools buy and serve more local food.

Administrative burden is reduced for school districts and the Agency of Education

A vertical arrangement of white silhouettes of a spoon, a knife, and a fork on a dark red background. The spoon is at the top, the knife is in the middle, and the fork is at the bottom.

# Only Universal School Meals can:

- take cash registers out of the cafeteria
- eliminate stigma for low income students
- eliminate unpaid meal debt
- reduce paperwork & administrative costs
- let schools maximize the purchase of local food
- Ensure all students are well fed and ready to learn