



News Release

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EXPANDED PILOT PROGRAM A WIN-WIN FOR MICHIGAN KIDS, FARMERS

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LANSING – A dime still can go a long way with a pilot farm-to-school cafeteria reimbursement program designed to provide fresh, locally-grown produce to students while investing in state agriculture, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) announced today.

The *10 cents a Meal for School Kids and Farms* incentive program will provide schools with up to 10 cents per meal to purchase and serve Michigan fruits and vegetables to an estimated 43,000 students.

“This program increases the nutrition and healthy eating habits of our kids and at the same time boosts the state economy through a per-meal reimbursement,” State Superintendent Brian Whiston said.

The \$250,000 state appropriation to fund this pilot program originated in the Senate and was included in the final State School Aid budget this year.

“I am pleased that the budget included funding for the *10 cents a Meal* pilot project,” said Sen. Darwin Booher, R-Ewart, who initiated the measure. “We think it has the potential for doing so many good things for our kids and for our state.”

In the original pilot, three districts spent a combined \$150,000 on local produce over two years, compared to just \$30,731 total in a one-year pre-pilot test.

Through this expanded competitive-grant, the program now includes 16 school districts in eight counties. In the original pilot program, there were seven districts in three northeast Lower Michigan counties, which saw a 142-percent annual increase in spending on 23 varieties of fruits and vegetables from 36 farms.

The 16 districts chosen are:

- Glen Lake Community Schools
- Traverse City Area Public Schools
- Grand Haven Area Public Schools

- Forest Hills Public Schools
- Leland Public School District
- Boyne Falls Public School District
- Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools
- Northport Public School District
- Coopersville Area Public School District
- Muskegon Heights Public School Academy System
- Muskegon, Public Schools of the City of
- Montague Area Public Schools
- Whitehall District Schools
- Oakridge Public Schools
- Manistee Area Public Schools
- Ravenna Public Schools

The 16 districts served 3.8 million meals last year, with seven of them having 50 percent or more of their students qualified for free or reduced lunch programs.

Representing areas where there is a heavy concentration of farmers, distributors, and food hubs, the districts must purchase fruits and vegetables grown in Michigan and, if minimally processed, also are processed here. They must serve these foods in meals that are part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs that include school breakfast, lunch, after-school snacks and suppers.

“The timing is right for this expanded pilot because USDA standards require more and greater varieties of fruits and vegetables,” Whiston said. “Additionally, surveys show that school food service directors want to purchase more local produce, and Michigan farmers are interested in providing to their local school districts.”

MDE receives support for this program from the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development.

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