



## Free School Meals – Community Eligibility

As you may have heard, the Wilkes-Barre Area School District has notified parents of students attending Wilkes-Barre Area Schools that all students are now eligible to receive a free school breakfast and free school lunch. This is made possible due to a change in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs known as the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

The Community Eligibility Provision provides an alternative approach for offering school meals to schools in low income areas, instead of collecting individual applications for free and reduced price meals. The CEP allows schools that predominantly serve low-income children to offer free school meals to all students. The CEP uses information from other programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (TANF) instead of traditional paper applications.

For the CEP to benefit a school, a significant number of students attending the school must be categorized as economically disadvantaged. Most schools in Luzerne County do not meet these criteria, including Bear Creek Community Charter School. As a result, these schools continue to evaluate whether students receive a free or reduced priced school meal based upon the standard criteria allowed by the United States Department of Agriculture and do not implement the Community Eligibility Provision.

All parents are urged to complete a Free & Reduced Priced School Meals Family Application, which is available on the School's web site at [www.bearcreekschool.com](http://www.bearcreekschool.com) under the category of "Food Service". Parents can also apply online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us). Bear Creek Community Charter School will also continue to collaborate with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to directly certify children for free school meals. Direct Certification is the process to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications.

**REMINDER:** Families must complete a new Free and Reduced Price School Meals Family Application each year. If your child received a free or reduced lunch during the month of June of the prior school year, he/she will be eligible as a carryover for breakfast and lunch for the first 30 days of the new school year. You must file a new Free and Reduced Price School Meals Family Application form or process an online application through COMPASS within the first 30 days of the new school year and be approved for whichever category of eligibility by the Food Service Director, in order to qualify for this service for the remainder of the new school year.