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LETTER TO:

FROM:

DATE:

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OMB Approval No.: 0584-0530 Approval Expires:
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Date

<<Name>>, <<Title>>
<<School District>>
<<Address>>
<<City, State, Zip>>

Dear <<Name>>:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and its research partners, Westat, Inc. and Decision Information Resources, to conduct the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Access, Participation, Eligibility, and Certification (APEC-II) study (also known as the National School Meals Study) for school year (SY) 2012-2013. Your district has been selected to participate.

APEC-II is a follow-up study to the original APEC study conducted in 2005-06. APEC provided the first reliable national estimates of National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) certification and administrative processes, including accuracy and error rates and led to important improvements in the programs. APEC-II will include nationally representative samples of school districts and schools and students within those sampled districts. It will examine participation, eligibility, and certification in the NSLP and the SBP to derive amounts and sources of erroneous reimbursements due to certification error (administrative errors versus household misreporting) and meal counting and claiming errors. APEC-II will also include the recently introduced provision, the Community Eligibility Option (CEO), in its national estimates.

The study requires the collection of data from several sources: school records; school and school district officials responsible for collection, certification, and verification of school meal applications; cashier transactions; and student households. The study's researchers will visit your district and several sampled schools during a target week in the school year to observe and collect information on how school meals are counted and claimed for reimbursement from the USDA. For the sampled schools in your SFA who are not participating in the Community Eligibility Option, we will select samples of students who were approved for free or reduced-price meals or had their applications denied. We plan to conduct interviews with those students' parents or guardians on their participation in the school food program during SY 2012-2013. For sampled schools in your district that are not participating in the CEO or a Provision 2/3 school in a non-base year, we will select a sample from among all students in those schools, but will only collect information from school and school district records for those students; we will not need to conduct an interview.

The information collected by the study will be aggregated to form national and state estimates and are for research purposes only. Results will never be used to identify any individual student or household, school, or school food authority, or to alter any student's current benefit status or the meal reimbursements paid to school food authorities.

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This study is authorized under the 2002 Improper Payments Information Act, which requires all Federal agencies that administer large programs to identify and reduce erroneous payments and report their findings to the Office of Management and Budget. Participation of selected districts and schools is required under Section 305 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. To verify your state's support of the study and to address any questions you have, you may contact your state's liaison for this study, the Child Nutrition Director, (<<CN DIRECTOR NAME>>). USDA contacts include: (<<REGIONAL OFFICE DIRECTOR CONTACT>>) and Reneé Arroyo-Lee Sing (USDA, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation), the FNS project officer, at (703) 305-2126 or by e-mail at renee.arroyo-leesing@fns.usda.gov.

A member of the study team will be following up directly with your office to provide more information and to coordinate your district's participation in the study. Feel free to contact me with any questions about the study at (8xx) xxx-xxxx or e-mail me at lcstner@mathematica-mpr.com. Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation. We look forward to working with you to conduct this important study.

Sincerely,

cc: <<Name District Superintendent>>

Attachments: Study Overview
Study Brochure for Households

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this collection is 0584-0530. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3-5 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, searching existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collected.