

C11. GROUP 3—PRINCIPAL INTRODUCTION LETTER TO SCHOOLS

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<DATE>

<P_FN> <P_LN>
<School>

Dear <P_FN> <P_LN>:

Recently, your school was selected for the School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study (SNMCS) as part of your district's required participation in the study. Mathematica Policy Research and Abt Associates are conducting the SNMCS for the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The study will examine the food and nutrient content of school meals, as well as meal costs and revenues. The study comes at a critical time as child nutrition continues to be a pressing issue faced by educators and policymakers. The enclosed fact sheet provides an overview of the SNMCS.

We will be conducting some data collection efforts at your school. We will send professionally trained field interviewers to conduct interviews and observations, but we are asking for your support to ensure that this is a smooth process for everyone involved. **We ask that a school liaison be designated that the study can work with directly to coordinate the details of the data collection.** (This person should not typically be the food service manager. We are already working directly with the district's food service director to coordinate study activities involving food service operations.)

The following data collection activities are set to take place in your School Food Authority (SFA) and school during SY 2014-2015:

Cafeteria Observations. Data collectors will observe one lunch and one breakfast period (if the school participates in the School Breakfast Program) in each sampled school to document characteristics of food service operations.

Principal, SFA Director, Business Manager, and School Nutrition Manager Cost Interviews. You, along with designated SFA directors, business managers, and food service managers will be asked to participate in an interview to provide information about the full cost of food service, including indirect and administrative costs.

Principal and SFA Director Surveys. Web-based surveys will be sent by email to you and your SFA Director. The surveys will contain questions needed to characterize district policies, food service operations, and the school environment. The Principal Survey is brief, covering general school characteristics and school policies related to nutrition education and physical activity/education. An e-mail invitation with a link to the web survey will be sent when it is ready to be completed.

Competitive Foods Checklists. The designated school liaison will be asked to complete a simple set of forms detailing the availability to students of vending machine items and other sources of food such as school stores. We will communicate with your school liaison by e-mail or phone to get the checklist completed.



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Complete a Menu Survey. Your school's food service manager will be asked to complete a detailed Menu Survey. This web-based survey will collect information on the foods offered and served in reimbursable lunches, breakfasts, and afterschool snacks (if offered) during a target week.

Plate Waste Observations. Data collectors will estimate the proportion of foods wasted by students in order to assess the nutrient and food group composition of foods wasted, and to assess the relationship between plate waste and characteristics of students, school food environments, and school food service operations.

Participation in the study by selected states, districts, and schools is required under Section 305 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA). Your participation in this study is extremely valuable and we appreciate the time and effort that you and other school staff will devote to the study. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our project team at 855-###-####, or e-mail SNMCS@abtassoc.com.

We look forward to working with you on this important study.

Sincerely,

Maria Boyle
Project Director (Abt Associates)
Abt Associates



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