

OMB Number: 0584-0530
Expiration Date:
XX/XX/XXXX



Third Access, Participation,
Eligibility and Certification
Study Series

Dear <<SCHOOL CONTACT NAME>>,

By now, you should have received notice from your School Food Authority (SFA) Director that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has contracted with Westat to conduct the Third Access, Participation, Eligibility and Certification Study series (APEC III). <<SCHOOL NAME>> is one of nearly 800 schools randomly selected to participate in the APEC III study.

APEC III is a Federally mandated study that is authorized under the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act (IPERIA) of 2012 and complies with the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) requirements for participation in evaluations and research of the Child Nutrition Programs. Participation of selected districts and schools is required under Section 305 of the HHFKA. FNS depends upon studies such as APEC III to meet HHFKA requirements and report their findings to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

APEC III is a research study, **not an audit**. All information collected will be used for research purposes only, kept private, and will not affect meal reimbursements or meal program benefits for any participating State agency, SFA, school, or household/student.

About the APEC III Study

The goal of APEC III is to provide FNS with reliable, national estimates of erroneous payments in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) in school year (SY) 2017-2018. APEC III will include a nationally representative sample of school districts, schools (both Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and non-CEP schools), and students. Your cooperation is critical to ensure a representative sample, scientifically valid findings, and improvements to the NSLP and SBP. We have enclosed a study fact sheet that provides additional information about the study.

APPENDIX 09. SCHOOL STUDY NOTIFICATION LETTER

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0530. The time required for the school principal or staff member to complete this information collection is estimated to average 5 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search

About Data Collection

Data collection activities will take place during SY 2017-2018 and, in most instances, can be completed in one day. There will be no direct involvement with students at the school. Our data collection activities include:

1. **School meal observation** - Data collectors will observe breakfast and lunch meals, wherever the meals are served (e.g., cafeteria, classroom, etc.). They will observe and record the items on the tray of a random sample of students, and if the cashier recorded the meal as a reimbursable meal. They will not collect any data about individual students.
2. **Cafeteria manager interview.** For approximately 10% of randomly selected schools, an interview with the cafeteria manager will be conducted to learn more about the school's meal claiming procedures and process. Your cafeteria manager may or may not be selected.
3. **Meal Counts.** Data collectors will request and abstract meal counts submitted by the school to the SFA.

If your school is a non-CEP:

4. **Household Survey.** A survey will be conducted with a sample of parents/guardians of students that applied for meal benefits. We will contact the sampled households separately to invite them to participate. Participation is voluntary and the survey will take place in the household of the parent/guardian. [Note that the household survey component of APEC III is entitled National School Meals Study].

Next Steps

Data collection will take place in SY 2017-2018. Prior to the start of the school year, a member of the APEC III research team will contact you or your designee to plan for data collection. In the meantime, if, you have any questions the study and your participation, please feel free to contact us at 1-855-820-6138 or via email at schoolmealstudy@westat.com.

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

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<NAME AND TITLE OF SENDER>