

State of Iowa  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
School Food Services Section  
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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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A brief summary of progress made in expanding the National School Lunch Program to all of Iowa's public school children written by Vern Carpenter, Chief, School Food Services Section, Iowa Department of Public Instruction. This was written at the time the goal was reached on October 15, 1973. The writer's purpose was not to make an exhaustive report nor to mention all aspects, but to give highlights.

A Summary of Progress made in expanding the National School Lunch Program to all of Iowa's Public School Children from 1946 to 1973.

by Vern Carpenter

The National School Lunch Act was enacted by the Congress in 1946, and National School Lunch Programs were started in Iowa during the 1946-47 school year. Several school feeding programs had been operated in Iowa prior to this date.

Mr. C. W. Bangs became the first state director for the Iowa School Lunch Program on August 16, 1946, a position he held until his retirement on June 15, 1958. He was succeeded by Mr. E. E. Cowan on June 15, 1958. E. E. Cowan directed the program until his retirement in January, 1970, when he was succeeded by Vern Carpenter, present chief of Section.

Because of excellent records initiated by Edward J. Heim, Jr., then chief accountant, much data is available to show growth and progress. Only a minimal amount of data, however, will be presented herein for background information.

During 1946-47, the first year for National School Lunch Programs in Iowa, the average daily student participation was 85,558. A total of 13,920,005 lunches were served during the school year. Iowa's school enrollment was 459,131. A total of 740,848 free lunches were served but not necessarily to economically needy children. A lunch was then reported as free when it was served to a student helper at no cost in return for his labor. Later, in this article, participation figures and data will be given for the month of September, 1973, to show growth in the program.

The number of Iowa public schools participating that first year was 791. Federal reimbursement was 9 cents per lunch for a total of \$1,023,405 for the year. Federal reimbursement that initial year was greater than it has been in any succeeding year to date. During the period from 1954 to 1970 (16 years), it was 4 cents. For the 1972-73 school year it was 8 cents.

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Food costs per lunch the first year averaged 18.0 cents, labor 7.6 cents and other costs 2.5 cents for a total of 28.1 cents. These average amounts have doubled since then. At the start of the program, schools were required to send receipts for all purchases each month to the State office for documentation. Checking all receipts for all participating schools was a sizeable monthly task. Fortunately, this procedure has long since been discontinued.

A record of government commodities received the first year is not available. Commodities received during the 1948-49 school year were valued at \$942,923 and consisted of nineteen different foods. No red meat nor poultry was received; however, 5,003,100 lbs. of Irish potatoes were received valued at \$200,124 (116 rail carloads).

During succeeding years more schools voluntarily started lunch programs and during this early period of growth many lunch programs were initiated, sponsored and operated by Parent Teachers Associations. Since the active membership of Parent Teachers Associations was comprised mostly of women, due credit must be given these women who were instrumental in getting the first lunch programs started in Iowa. Often, the home economics teacher helped plan menus as an extra duty, a practice which has been discontinued.

Vern Carpenter was employed by the Department of Public Instruction in 1958 as a consultant-auditor for the School Food Services Section. His duties included conducting on-site administrative reviews of schools having lunch programs and schools having only milk programs.

When visiting school districts Mr. Carpenter developed the habit of visiting all school buildings within the district. Efforts were made to encourage districts to start lunch programs in buildings without lunch programs and to start milk programs in buildings without milk programs.

After visiting and administratively reviewing lunch programs in many school districts it became apparent to him that most rural school districts had lunch and milk programs in most of their buildings--not all. Also, that in Iowa's larger school districts, lunch programs were available in most senior high schools, in a large percentage of junior high schools, but were lacking in a high percentage of elementary schools.

From these on-site visits it was evident that many of these elementary schools without lunch programs were housed in the older school buildings. Most of these older elementary buildings were located in the oldest sections of the cities. Many of these older elementary schools without lunch programs housed large concentrations of economically needy children. Further, there was a high percentage of pupil turnover during each school year in these older elementary schools.

In short, thousands of Iowa's economically needy school children from low-income families did not have access to a lunch program--not even to a milk program.

It became clear that the haves had it and that the have nots did not have it.

Mr. Carpenter discussed this situation with Mr. Cowan and the decision was reached during March of 1961 to get a milk program started in every public school without a milk program and to get a lunch program started in every public school without a lunch program. A very important part of this decision was that first priority was to be given to economically needy children.

This concentrated drive to expand the lunch program to all public schools began during Mr. Cowan's tenure. He gave Mr. Carpenter complete freedom to work for expansion as the situation demanded while he actively supported this expansion program in the field.

The School Food Services Section maintained a list of all schools participating in the lunch and milk programs but was not required to maintain a list of schools not participating. Hence, there was no complete list of non-participating schools available.

To compile a complete list of all (literally) school buildings is, in a few words, a time-consuming and difficult task. To do so took several years. From time to time the list of schools without programs was believed to be accurate only to find a year later there were more schools without programs despite the fact that new programs had been started in the meantime.

The difficulty in locating and identifying schools without lunch programs can be illustrated with an example:

1. In April, 1967, it was estimated that 300 schools in 22 school districts had no programs. These schools were concentrated in Iowa's largest cities.
2. In November, 1967, after further study it was estimated that there were 275 schools without programs in Iowa's largest 35 districts. Further, that 95,460 children were without food service out of a total of 638,000 enrollment, that 99% of these were elementary children, and that 85% of them lived in cities. Many of these no-program schools housed large concentrations of economically needy children.
3. In March, 1968, however, the number of schools known to have no program had risen to 352 representing an estimated 116,864 children.

In 1966 a special assistance program was made available by the U. S. Department of Agriculture technically known as the Section 11 program. Under its provisions the State School Food Services consultant could visit a school district that had buildings without lunch programs and offer this special program to fit the school's needs. This special program greatly facilitated getting lunch programs started in Iowa.

This special assistance program permitted a school district to start a lunch program in a needy school building and establish a student lunch price below the price charged in its affluent schools. This low lunch price did much to encourage parents with low incomes to have their children participate. Free and reduced-price lunches were provided those children who were economically needy.

The Council Bluffs, Des Moines, Dubuque, and Sioux City Community School Boards accepted this special assistance program when made available to them. So did other school districts.

In the opinion of Mr. Cowan and Mr. Carpenter, these special assistance programs operating in a few schools did much initially to get school districts to start lunch programs. Unfortunately, in the opinion of Mr. Carpenter, the USDA discontinued important features of this special program which are no longer available to States that still have many schools without lunch programs.

School boards and school administrators typically are fearful that the federal government will get them to start a new program and then back out once the program gets started.

On October 17, 1966, Mr. Carpenter gave a speech at a breakfast meeting during the national convention of the American School Food Service Association held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He urged school food service personnel to get lunch programs started in all schools.

Mr. Carl E. Holt, then State School Lunch Director for Minnesota, obtained a copy of the speech and visual aids and used them every year until his retirement this year. One major city director who heard the speech advised Mr. Carpenter during the convention that he concurred with the idea of a lunch program in every school. The following year he expanded his lunch program to many more of the schools in his district. Although several had the same idea, the idea had not universally caught on and had to wait its turn.

The Congress in February, 1967, appropriated funds for schools with which to purchase minimal kitchen equipment needed to start lunch programs in schools having no program.

As stated above, under this concentrated drive to get additional lunch programs started in Iowa, first priority was given to starting lunch programs in needy schools (schools housing large concentrations of economically needy children). With this same goal in mind, it was decided that first priority for these federal equipment funds would be given to needy schools.

These federal equipment funds have done much to assist needy schools in starting lunch programs. Iowa's first appropriation was \$12,583.

In 1968 a study was conducted entitled "The Great Plains School District Organization Project," which comprised the states of Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota. The section of this study concerning child nutrition programs was written by Mr. Carpenter and on June 16, 1968, a section therefrom was reprinted on the editorial page of the Des Moines Register and Tribune.

Immediately after this article was reprinted on the editorial page in June of 1968, Senator Harold E. Hughes, then Governor of the State of Iowa, publicly expressed his concern about this condition that existed.

It was decided to ask Paul F. Johnston, then State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to request the State Board to adopt a resolution urging all school districts having school buildings without lunch programs to start programs. Mr. Johnston was most receptive to the idea and the Board adopted the resolution on November 13, 1968. Mr. Johnston gave his complete support to all child nutrition programs during his superintendency.

The Resolution passed by the State Board of Public Instruction was published in the Department's EDUCATIONAL BULLETIN and in the monthly newsletter of the School Food Services Section. Many schools posted this resolution on bulletin boards for all to read.

The plan for expanding the lunch program to all schools was based upon expanding the food preparation capacity of existing kitchens wherever possible rather than constructing and equipping new kitchens. By doing this, food would be transported to schools having no kitchen facilities. Transporting food would be less expensive than constructing new kitchens.

The Department of Public Instruction had organized a Superintendent's Advisory Committee which met monthly. Mr. Carpenter started appearing before this group on numerous occasions concerning child nutrition programs, and they, in turn, passed the information along to superintendents in their local area.

Mr. Carpenter wrote news releases and visited radio and TV stations. All were cooperative. The entire news media in Iowa has remained cooperative. Later Garry Lenhart, public information specialist, was employed by the Department of Public Instruction and thereafter he has written the news releases concerning food services. An effort has been made to keep the public well informed.

The Cooperative Extension Service of Iowa State University as well as the WOI Radio and TV stations, Iowa State University, cooperated in the fullest. Radio station KIOA in Des Moines has done much in this regard and continues to do so, as have many others.

As previously stated, many Iowa newspapers during this period printed articles favoring this expansion. The writer, however, believes that special acknowledgment must be given to the reporters and Editorial Writers of the Des Moines Register and Tribune. Time after time these writers supported this expansion as well as all other child nutrition programs administered by the School Food Services Section (school lunch program, school breakfast program, special food service program for children, and the special milk program).

Whenever a superintendent of a school district retired, the newly elected superintendent was immediately contacted about expanding the lunch program to all schools in his district.

Often a newly elected superintendent can instigate new programs within the first year or two of his superintendency where the former superintendent who had been in office several years seemed unable to do so. This statement casts no reflections on former superintendents, many of whom had started programs during previous superintendencies.

In any event, these newly elected superintendents displayed dynamic and exemplary leadership and got programs started in every one of their schools. Some did so with little or no cash in reserve. They led the way and the school board and parents responded favorably. It took courage on the part of these superintendents to undertake such an expansion and carry it through to its successful completion.

In 1970 a regulation was established in Iowa that all public school districts must serve free or reduced-price lunches to economically needy children even though the needy child attended a school having no lunch program. Whether the child would participate under these conditions was left to the parent to decide.

At first this rule was considered unworkable, that the anonymity of the economically needy child would not be protected, etc., etc.

School boards, school administrators, and school food service personnel immediately and willingly accept this challenge and made the plan work. After all, which was better? for the hungry, needy child to have a nutritious lunch under these conditions or to go hungry? Apparently, parents of these children preferred to have their children eat lunch because no difficulties were encountered. The plan worked well.

As a natural outgrowth of this plan, parents of affluent children began asking school administrators why their children couldn't eat, too. These questions asked by concerned parents gave added impetus to starting programs where all children could eat.

On September 1, 1970, records show there remained 113 public school buildings without lunch programs in 17 school districts housing 39,835 school children. An estimated 9,511 of these children were considered economically needy. Twenty-seven of these buildings that had no lunch program were drawing Title I ESEA federal funds.

Although not required, the School Food Services Section nevertheless thought it important to maintain a current total of the ethnic population by school building that had no lunch program. On September 1, 1970, these statewide totals by ethnic group were:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Afro-American	1,399	3.5%
Indian	40	0.1
Oriental	110	0.3
Spanish	122	0.3
Other	42	0.1
White	38,122	95.7

On March 11, 1970, Governor Robert D Ray, governor of Iowa, sponsored The Governor's Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health in the Stephens Auditorium at Iowa State University in Ames. Mr. Carpenter was one of the speakers and spoke concerning efforts needed to be made to accomplish the goal of having a lunch program available to every child attending public schools, especially the economically needy child.

Frank Miller, well-known cartoonist for the Des Moines Register and Tribune, drew a cartoon which appeared on the March 13, 1970, issue captioned "RIGHT HERE IN IOWA." The cartoon depicted overflowing grain bins in Iowa contrasted to hungry children not receiving lunch at school.

About this time, organizations representing low-income families sprang up in and around Washington, D. C. These organizations gave and are still giving much emphasis to getting lunch and breakfast programs started.

The United Presbyterian Women's Association during 1970 concentrated on feeding hungry children in all states. The mere fact that these women discussed this problem in their women's groups and in church meetings was extremely helpful in Iowa.

In preceding paragraphs it has been shown that Iowa's accomplishment was not the result of the efforts of any one person but was a cooperative effort. It is not possible for this writer to recall every person and every organization during these 12 years who made a significant contribution. No one, however, has been intentionally omitted.

The writer wishes to briefly mention numerous additional individuals and organizations who gave assistance. Perhaps acknowledgment should be given to the mother of a low-income family who one day years ago said to Mr. Carpenter, "Why is it that in our school we can't even have a lunch program for our children while other schools have swimming pools?" The question is repeated not to elicit a categorical answer, but to challenge thoughtful consideration.

Acknowledgment is given to the expertise and cooperation of the Chicago USDA office personnel. To members of the Iowa School Food Service Association. The President's 1969 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health as well as the Public Educational TV stations that aired this Conference. The TV networks who produced TV specials about hunger in the United States. To the authors of several excellent books of documentary nature concerning hunger. To the Hunger Marches in Des Moines.

To the Nutrition Council of Iowa, the Iowa Dietetic Association, the Iowa League of Women Voters, the Iowa Council of Churches, and the Parent Teachers Association.

Also, to individuals who conducted studies and surveys. To graduate students who wrote theses. To the Institution Management Department of Iowa State University who conducted seminars for undergraduate students and had students write term papers about child nutrition programs. To college professors in Iowa's colleges and universities whose undergraduate and graduate students discussed child nutrition programs in their college classes on school law, school administration, etc. To college students and college and university professors who gave their support. And to many others.

During the fall seasons of 1971 and 1972, 65 of Iowa's radio stations and 12 television stations as a public service ran spot announcements making known that free and reduced-price meals were available for economically needy children and how to apply.

Due credit must be given to both the professional and clerical staff members of the School Food Services Section. Other Sections and Divisions of the Department of Public Instruction have been most helpful which includes, among others, the Management Information Division, Accounting Section, Information and Publication Services, and the Supervision Division of the Instruction and Professional Education Branch.

Public law 91-248 passed by the Congress on May 14, 1970, provided extra federal reimbursement for free and reduced-price lunches served. This assured additional financial assistance to schools serving free and reduced-price lunches.

Another important event regarding financial assistance that helped attain this goal must be mentioned. For years the federal formula for allocating reimbursement to states was, in the opinion of Mr. Carpenter, unfair, out-dated, and needed to be changed immediately. For example, even though Iowa's per capita income is slightly below the national average, Iowa's schools received only 4 cents reimbursement per lunch while other states received far more.

Moreover, during several years, Iowa would run out of federal funds for this 4-cent reimbursement before the school year ended and would have to notify schools there would be no reimbursement after March 17, April 12, or whatever.

Mr. Carpenter refused to believe it cost more to prepare and serve a lunch in a state receiving 6 cents reimbursement than it did in Iowa whose schools received only 4 cents.

The 11 Midwest State Directors (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) studied this inequality and decided to do something about it. No other state or group of states nor the American School Food Service Association worked for this change until much later.

The key person in bringing about this change in the Congress and in getting the 4 cents reimbursement per lunch raised to 5 cents was former Senator Jack Miller, Iowa. Senator Miller was ranking minority leader on the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Through his leadership this was accomplished.

Senator Miller arose on the Senate Floor at the opportune time and offered an amendment to the bill to raise federal reimbursement from 4 cents to 5 cents because it was badly needed. It must be pointed out that he did this after it had been voted out of the Senate Agriculture Committee at 4 cents. It must be borne in mind that he was a member of the Committee.

As a result, all schools in all states are federally reimbursed on the same basis which is based on the number of lunches served. Truly, this corrected a long-standing inequality and gave Iowa's schools and schools in many other states a boost financially.

Further assists in reaching this goal came from the Iowa Legislature in two main thrusts. Mrs. Charlene Conklin then State Senator, Waterloo, was instrumental in introducing a bill requiring all public schools to have lunch programs and maintain them by the fall of 1973. The bill passed in 1971.

State Representative Charles Grassley, New Hartford, was chairman of the Schools Committee when the Iowa Legislature first appropriated state-tax funds to meet the state matching requirement of federal regulations for fiscal year 1972. The amount appropriated was of great financial assistance to schools.

During the school year 1972-73, the Congress responded expeditiously and approved a bill providing cash to schools in lieu of a government commodity shortfall. This cash payment was a lifesaver to Iowa's public school lunch programs. Cash balances in school district lunch funds declined because of sharply increased food prices during the year but would have been in much worse condition but for this cash payment.

As can be seen, the Congress has given its support to child nutrition programs during the years. So have Iowa's Congressmen. This is also true of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee.



For readership interest, here is a comparison between 1946 when the National School Lunch Program began and September, 1973, when the goal of having a lunch program available to all public school children was reached:

	<u>Schools Participating</u>	<u>Lunches served daily</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>% of Participation</u>	<u>Free and reduced-price lunches served</u>	<u>Total Number lunches served during year</u>
9/73	2,015	384,294	613,874	68.6%	10,930,901 (72-73)	69,203,147 (72-73)
1946	791	85,558	459,131	16.7%	740,848.	13,920,005

At present, two school districts that have had lunch programs for years are constructing new buildings and have torn down the old school and the kitchen as well. This is temporary and their school boards have made provisions for new kitchens to be operating at the earliest possible date.

The Midwest Regional Office, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Chicago, Illinois, was asked to provide a list of States that have a National School Lunch Program available in every public school building and to obtain the national percentage of schools without National School Lunch Programs. Numerous states have no accurate record of school buildings without programs so this latter figure is difficult to obtain and is an estimate at best.

According to information received from R. J. Nelson, Program Director for the Midwest USDA Regional Office, their office can state that Iowa is the first State in the 10 State Midwest Region to have National School Lunch Programs operating in 100% of its public school buildings.

Apparently, there is no accurate record of the percentage of school buildings in the nation with National School Lunch programs but a fair estimate might be 50 to 55 percent. Hawaii, which is comprised of one school district operated by the State, has lunch programs in all of its public schools.

Whether Iowa is actually second in the nation or fifth is of little consequence. The important fact is that Iowa's public school children are being fed. Iowa has 6 Amish schools that do not wish to have the program plus 18 kindergarten-only schools that are exempted by state law. The writer doesn't believe that who's on first in this ball game makes any difference. We didn't start to win a race, we started to feed children.

Let us take another view of this matter and look at it in a different way. In our nation the federal child nutrition programs are about the only federal or state programs that give first priority to the economically needy child.

Other federal programs allocate federal funds to States based upon the number of economically needy children residing within the State, but after the funds are distributed to States these funds are used for other purposes. The economically needy child is not given priority in these other programs.

Not so with child nutrition programs. Special care is taken to make certain the economically needy child is fed.

Another important aspect of federal child nutrition programs is the fact that the U. S. Department of Agriculture and all State Agencies administering these programs make every effort to assure that funds appropriated by the Congress for food for children is spent for food for children.

THE FUTURE. We cannot stand still because we have reached this important educational goal. An immediate goal is to initiate nutrition education into our public schools.

Somehow funds must be obtained with which to employ a nutrition education specialist on the staff of the School Food Services Section, Department of Public Instruction, to coordinate this effort, and to provide leadership.

School boards, school administrators, parents, legislators, and the general public are becoming more aware of the importance of proper nutrition. We have long since realized the importance of proper nutrition for livestock because we wish to sell this livestock at a profit. Now we are realizing how malnutrition affects a child's brain before and after birth, its attention span, learning ability, physical ability, general growth and health.

The writer believes that the public and those in responsible positions will respond.



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