

For those of you who joined us for the web forum on the budget, there were a couple of questions asked that we could not answer at the time. Those answers are below.

Lunch shaming: the language modifies section 1337 of the Public School Code. The new language requires a board of school directors to establish a requirement for schools under its jurisdiction to provide a school food program meal to a student who request one (regardless of whether he/she can pay), unless the student's parent/guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a school meal. The current language in that section defines "school food program" as a program under which food is served by any school on a nonprofit basis to children in attendance, including any such program under which a school receives assistance out of funds appropriated by the Congress of the United States.

The language does not prohibit a school from offering a student an alternative meal; however, you should consider whether the provision of an alternative meal to a student who cannot pay would violate the section of new language that prohibits a school from identifying or stigmatizing a student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes money for a school meal.

When a student owes money for 5 or more school meals, the new language requires boards of school directors to make at least 2 attempts to reach the student's parent/guardian to apply for participation in the school food program and allows the school to offer assistance in applying.

The new language also requires school directors to require schools to direct communications regarding money owed by a student to the student's parent/guardian and not to the student. The language expressly allows schools to contact a student's parent/guardian via a letter addressed to the parent/guardian and delivered by the student.

School directors must prohibit a school from publicly identifying or stigmatizing a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes money for a meal, from requiring a student who cannot pay to perform chores or other work (if chores or other work are required of all students regardless of ability to pay, it is permissible) and from requiring a student to discard a meal after it is served due to the student's inability to pay for it or other prior meals.

Superintendent contracts: the language modifies sections 1073 and 1077 of the Public School Code, which applies to district superintendents and assistant district superintendents. The language requires the school board to act a superintendent/asst. superintendent's contract 90 days before expiration (current law is 150 days). If the school board fails to act, the contract is automatically renewed for 1 year (not for another full term, as required by current law). The new language states that the 1 year renewal can happen only one time. The language does not reference anything with respect to terms of a contract in existence (and therefore does not change the terms of a contract), nor does it require superintendent contracts to include the 90 day language going forward.