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Program providing fresh produce to Wisconsin students has record number of participants

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction today announced a grant program that increases access to fresh produce in schools has the largest number of participants in the program’s history.

[The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#), funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered by the DPI, provides students in eligible public and private schools a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day through reimbursement to schools. The program is serving 85,527 elementary students in 239 Wisconsin schools during the 2021-22 school year – the highest participation since the program launched in the state in the 2008-09 school year.

“We know that ensuring students receive healthy meals throughout the day is essential to help Wisconsin’s children learn,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is an effective way for eligible schools to improve healthy snack options available to students and to increase access to fresh produce.”

Schools eligible to participate in the program must have 50 percent or more of students receiving subsidized school meals, or an equivalent rate for Community Eligibility Program sites. [Section 19 of the National School Lunch Act](#) requires that schools with the highest free and reduced-price enrollment be given priority for participation in the program. This is the key selection criterion, which ensures the program benefits low-income children who generally have fewer opportunities to consume fresh fruits and vegetables on a regular basis. About \$4.3 million is available in Wisconsin for reimbursement for the 2022 fiscal year.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program was introduced in four states in 2002 and has since expanded nationwide. Wisconsin adopted the program in 2008. For additional information on the program, visit dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/programs/fresh-fruit-vegetable.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2021/fresh-fruit-vegetable-program-wisconsin>.