Dear Friends:

Welcome to our latest issue of EdHealth!

Among other issues, we look at one unexpected impact of the state's landmark legislation to reform its school financing system signed into law in July by Gov. Brown. Schools serving high numbers of poor children will be required to do a recount of students participating in their school lunch programs. In the case of Los Angeles Unified, that will require reaching out to hundreds of thousands of parents over the next few months, much to the consternation of school officials.

Please be sure to contact Jane Adams, our student wellness reporter, about any student wellness issues and upcoming events you think deserve greater coverage. And if you have not yet subscribed to EdHealth, please click here.

Best regards,

Louis Freedberg
Executive Director
EdSource

Counting low-income students

New requirements for tally of school lunch participants triggers dispute with state

By Jane Meredith Adams
EdSource Today

Never has school lunch meant so much for California education.
Delivering significantly more money to schools based on the number of low-income children they serve is at the heart of the sweeping new K-12 finance system approved by the state Legislature in June. The new system defines “low income” as those students eligible for the school’s free and reduced-price meals program.

But two months into the rollout of the reforms, which Gov. Jerry Brown praised as a victory for the neediest students, two of the largest districts - Los Angeles Unified and Fresno Unified - are in a dispute with the state over a last-minute change in how children who receive free meals are counted.

Instead of moving into the school year confident of how much new funding they’ll receive for low-income students, the two districts, as well as scores of other districts in the state, are now being asked to submit new data from hundreds of thousands of low-income families before the funding will be released. Read more.

Focus on attendance

Schools focus on intervention, understanding to stem chronic absenteeism

By Jane Meredith Adams
EdSource Today

With chronic absenteeism costing California school districts millions and putting huge numbers of students at academic risk, schools from Willits to Los Angeles and beyond are working harder than ever to address the root causes of absenteeism, including student health, family distress and how connected students feel to adults at school.

"Why are these kids gone?" asked Debra Duardo, executive director for Student Health and Human Services at the Los Angeles Unified School District. Read more.

Obesity, fitness and learning, and binge drinking

Are parents responsible for obesity in their kids?

When pictures of obese children and the phrase "you can stop your child’s obesity" appeared in Georgia, a furor ensued. In an opinion piece in the latest issue of JAMA Pediatrics, Daniel Callahan discusses the Georgia anti-obesity campaign in "Children, Stigma, and Obesity." Check out an

How does fitness affect learning and memory?

With growing evidence linking fitness to academic achievement, a new study investigated what aspects of learning seem most improved by fitness. The result: complex memory tasks. University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign researchers found that aerobically fit students scored higher in difficult

White teens do more extreme binge drinking

Alcohol use among teenagers has declined overall recently, but "extreme" binge drinking - having 10 or more drinks on one occasion - is reported by one in 10 high school seniors, according to a study by researchers at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Of the white high school
audio podcast with Callahan and Ashley Cockrell Skinner, author of an opinion piece in the same issue, "The Love Song of the Headless Fatty and Other Observations."

memorization tasks than non-aerobically fit students. "The Influence of Childhood Aerobic Fitness on Learning and Memory" was published in the peer-reviewed journal PLOS One.

seniors surveyed, 12.5 percent said they’d had 10 or more drinks on one occasion, versus 3.2 percent of black students and 7.7 percent of Hispanics.

Data tools: Tracking suspension and vaccination rates

Online database tracks school suspension rates by district

Suspension rates for elementary and high school students in nearly every district in the state, and in much of the nation, are now easier to find using a new web tool announced by the Center for Civil Rights Remedies, a part of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

The tool sorts U.S. Department of Education data on suspension by race, ethnicity, gender, English learner and disability status and by school division levels: K-12, elementary school, secondary school or a comparison of elementary and secondary school. Read more.

How many parents opt-out of having their children vaccinated?

By signing a "personal belief exemption" stating that vaccines run counter to their beliefs, parents in California can get around the state law requiring that children be fully vaccinated to enter kindergarten.

Using data from the California Department of Public Health, KQED has created a searchable online chart of 7,637 California public, private and charter schools and the percentage of children with a personal belief exemption on file. The highest public school vaccination opt-out rate is 83 percent of kindergartners at a charter school in Siskiyou County.

Photo Op: Social skills for Common Core
Let's work together. Key social skills -- such as the ability to collaborate, to see others' perspectives, and to persevere in solving problems -- will help students achieve the complex thinking and understanding of material called for by the new Common Core standards being rolled out in schools across the state. In a kindergarten at Robinson Elementary in Fresno, Juh'Ziyah Atchinson, left, and Aubrey Blancas engage in activities designed to meet Common Core math standards and also involve collaboration.

Credit: Lillian Mongeau, EdSource

Webinar: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School

The Institute of Medicine and the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition will co-host a webinar for teachers, parents, school administrators, educators and school-based organizations about the findings and recommendations of the Institute of Medicine's report Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School. The webinar also will highlight two model programs -- Let's Move! Active Schools and the Presidential Youth Fitness Program -- that promote physical activity and quality physical education in schools.

Thursday, September 26, from 11 a.m. to 12 noon PT. Register.

California Student Health Legislation Watch
School-based mental health services: Assembly Bill 174, by Assemblyman Rob Bonta, D-Oakland, would establish a pilot grant program to fund school-based mental health services and trauma treatment for Alameda County students affected by violence. **Why it's important:** Lack of access to mental health care is an issue for students affected by trauma and violence; AB 174 would bring services to traumatized youth in schools, a model that has proven to be effective. **Status:** Passed Assembly and Senate, Sept. 9. Sent to Governor Brown for signature.

Electronic bullying off-campus: Assembly Bill 256, by Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia, D-Bell Gardens, would allow schools to suspend or expel students for bullying by electronic means that originated on or off school grounds. **Why it's important:** Schools would be authorized to take disciplinary action against students who bully by electronic means even at non-school events and while off campus. **Status:** Passed Assembly and Senate, Sept. 6. Sent to Governor Brown for signature.