

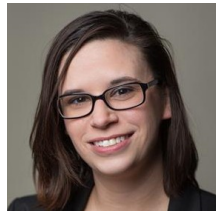
# Simplifying access to free school meals for eligible children

Wisconsin's Direct Certification program

# Simplifying access to free school meals for eligible children: Wisconsin's Direct Certification program



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# Session Overview

Purpose: to share information about automated enrollment in free school meals, called Direct Certification

## Topics:

- School lunch and direct certification background
- Initial barriers to direct certification in Wisconsin
- Outreach and education activities
- Program impact
- Current environment and next steps

# Covering Wisconsin (CWI)

- Initiated in 2003
- Based at UW-Madison
- Formerly Covering Kids & Families-Wisconsin (CKF)
- Mission:
  - To connect residents with - and promote effective use of - insurance coverage and other programs that support health
- Direct certification school outreach & education since 2011
- Other projects:
  - Health insurance enrollment navigator entity
  - Health insurance literacy

# National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in over 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

Established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.

# NSLP Free & Reduced Price Meals

- Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible for free meals.
- Children from families with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.
- Children from families with incomes over 185% of poverty pay full price.

Free lunches	Reduced-price lunches	Paid lunches
\$3.16	\$1.76	\$0.30

# Paper Application

## 2016-2017 Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Apply online at: [\(insert link if you have an online application or delete if not applicable\)](#).

Complete one application per household. Please use a pen (not a pencil).

In Community Eligibility Schools (CEP), receipt of free breakfast and lunch meals does not depend on returning this application; however, this information is necessary for other programs.

### STEP 1 List ALL infants, children, and students up to and including grade 12 who are Household Members

If more spaces are required for additional names, attach another sheet of paper.

Definition of Household Member: "Anyone who is living with you and shares income and expenses, even if not related."

Child's First Name	MI	Child's Last Name	Grade	School the child attends or NA if not in school	Foster Child	Homeless Migrant Runaway	Head Start
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### STEP 2 Do any Household Members (including you) currently participate in any of the following assistance programs: FoodShare, W-2 Cash Benefits, or FDIPIR?

Yes /  No

If you answered NO > Complete STEP 3. If you answered YES > Write a case number here, then go to STEP 4 (Do not complete STEP 3)

Case Number:

Program Name:

Write only one case number in this space.

Badger Care is not a qualifier for free meals.

### STEP 3 Report Income for ALL Household Members (Skip this step if you answered 'Yes' to STEP 2)

Flip the page and review the charts titled "Sources of Income" for more information.

#### A. Child Income

Sometimes children in the household earn income. Please include the TOTAL income earned by all infants, children and students up to and including grade 12 of all Household Members listed in STEP 1 here.

Child Income	How often?		
Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly
\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Special Situations

#### B. All Adult Household Members (including yourself)

List all Household Members not listed in STEP 1 (including yourself) even if they do not receive income. For each Household Member listed, if they do receive income, report total gross income (before taxes) for each source in whole dollars only (no cents). If they do not receive income from any source, write '0'. If you enter '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.

Name of Adult Household Members (First and Last)	C. Earnings from Work	How often?				D. Public Assistance/ Child Support/ Alimony/SSI/VA Benefit	How often?				E. Pensions/Retirement, Social Security, Other Income	How often?				F. Seasonal Workers, Annual contract paid over a shorter period of time (school employees), fluctuating income. Annualize income and report here.
		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly	
	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$
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G. Total Household Members (Children and Adults)

H. Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN) of Primary Wage Earner or Other Adult Household Member

X X X X X X

Check if no SSN

### STEP 4 Contact information and adult signature

I certify (promise) that all information on this application is true and that all income is reported. I understand that this information is given in connection with the receipt of Federal funds, and that school officials may verify (check) the information. I am aware that if I purposely give false information, my children may lose meal benefits, and I may be prosecuted under applicable State and Federal laws.

Street Address (if available)	Apt #	City	State	Zip	Daytime Phone and Email (optional)
Printed Name of Adult Completing the Form		Signature of Adult Completing the Form		Today's Date Mo./Day/Yr.	

# Direct Certification Overview

- ▶ Began in 1986 though USDA mandated as of 2004
- ▶ Automatically enrolls children in free school meals
  - ▶ No paper application needed
- ▶ Uses administrative data from qualifying public programs:
  - ▶ FoodShare (SNAP)
  - ▶ W-2 cash benefits (TANF)
  - ▶ Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- ▶ Also extends to children who are in foster care or who are homeless
- ▶ Variety of ways states can conduct matching



# Benefits of Direct Certification

Simplifies access to free school meals

Benefits to families...

- ▶ Free school meals are an additional benefit for households receiving FoodShare/W-2 cash benefits
- ▶ No additional applications; ensures all children in household
- ▶ Extension of Benefits

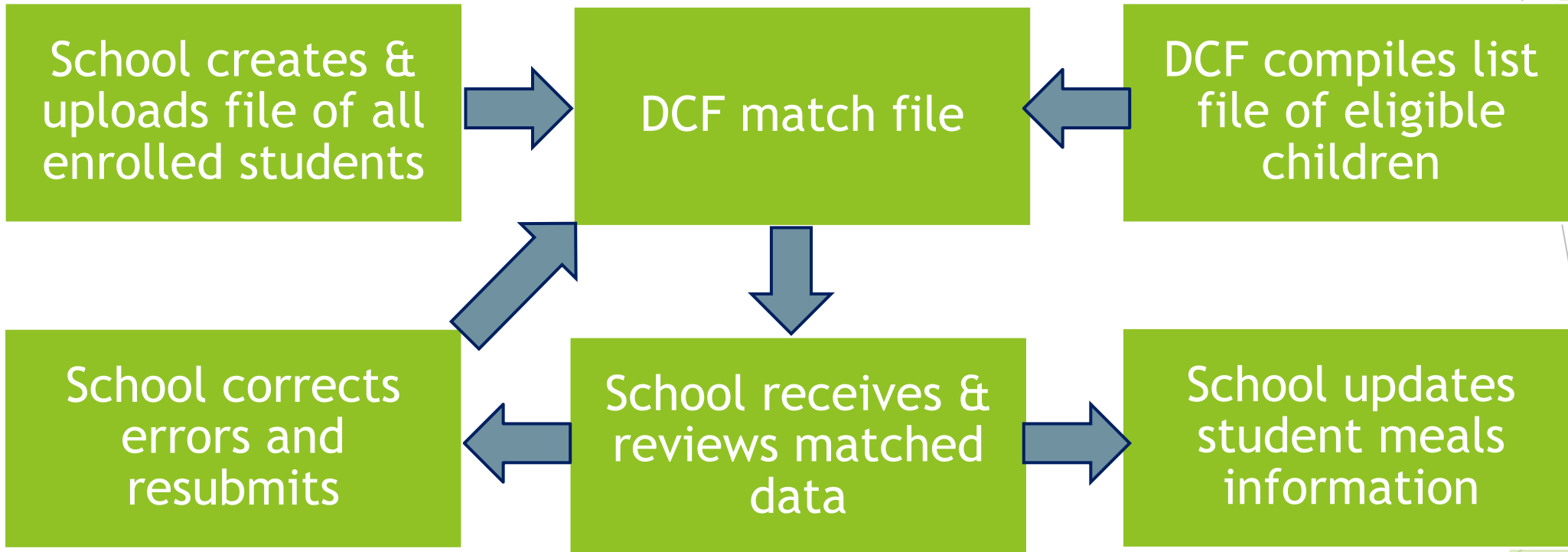
Benefits to schools...

- ▶ Less paperwork; Saves time
- ▶ More reimbursement for school meals
- ▶ More kids with steady access to meals

# Who's Involved in Direct Certification in WI?

- ▶ Schools
- ▶ School Food Authority (SFA)
- ▶ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)
- ▶ Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- ▶ Department of Health Services (DHS)

# Direct Cert Process in Wisconsin



# State of Wisconsin DC Web portal

## State of Wisconsin Direct Certification Program



### New Users

If you have not yet accessed direct certification through this website:

1. Click here to [Request access to the new direct certification system.](#)
2. Read the [Direct Certification Instruction manual.](#)
3. Once your account has been activated use the link below to log in to the direct certification system.

### For more information on Direct Certification

- check out the DPI School Nutrition Team Direct Certification web page at <http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/direct-certification>

### Registered Users

- [Click here to log in](#)

## State of Wisconsin Direct Certification Program



### Menu

[Home](#)

»My Matches«

[New Match](#)

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### DPI Support

[Edit District](#)

[Regen Match Results](#)

[Ind School Matching Rpt](#)

[Monthly School Matching Rpt](#)

### Support

[Choose District](#)

[Reports](#)

[Match Lookup](#)

### Instructions

Below is a list of Match Requests that have already been submitted for your school district.

- Click the "Download File" link to download the match file to your computer.
- To submit a new request, click the "New Match" link on the menu.



You must download and save match files to your computer. Match files are deleted from our system after 14 days.

### District 888888 (Department of Public Instruction)

Sent On	Status	Requested By	Match File
04/25/2017 04:35 PM	Complete	Lessner, Jessica	<a href="#">Download File</a> <a href="#">View File Info</a>
04/25/2017 04:20 PM	Complete	Paella, Laura	<a href="#">Download File</a> <a href="#">View File Info</a>
04/25/2017 04:19 PM	Complete	Paella, Laura	<a href="#">Download File</a> <a href="#">View File Info</a>

# School Participation in Direct Cert

- ▶ Required to match 95% of SNAP children by 2013-14

- ▶ Match calculated as:

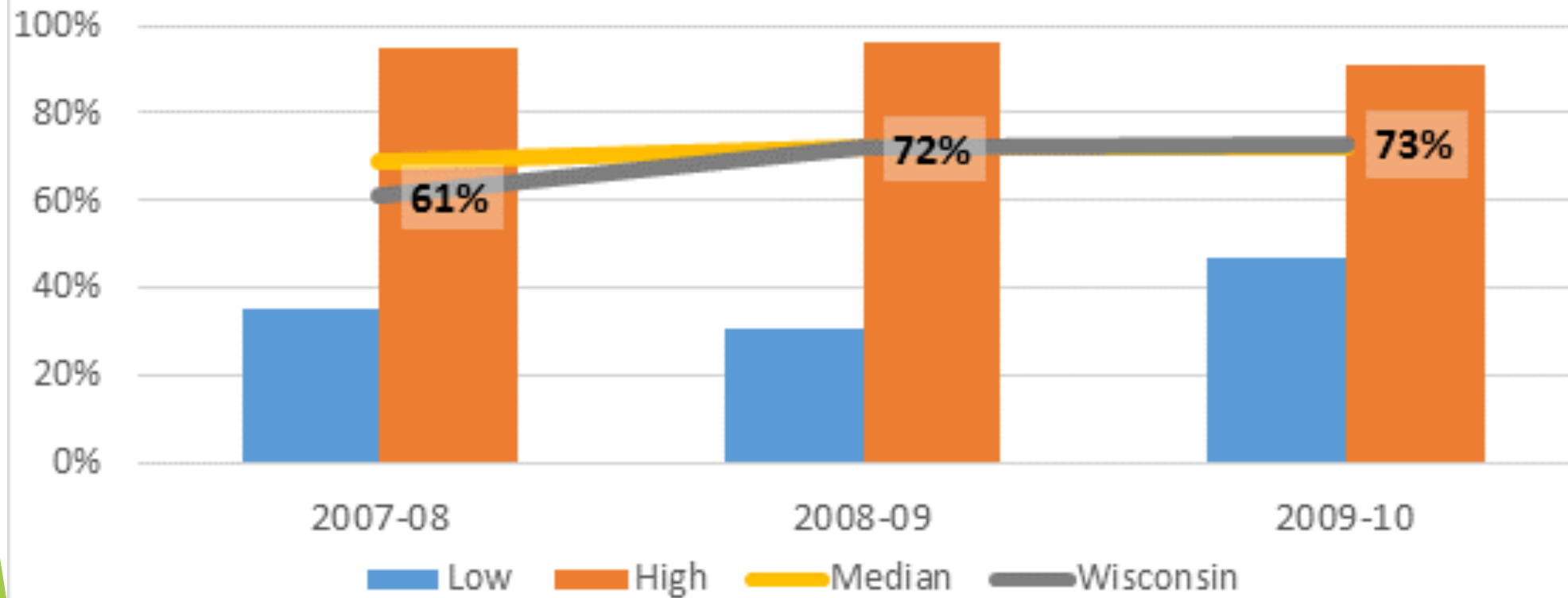
# of children directly certified through SNAP

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# children in SNAP-enrolled HHs

- ▶ In 2008, USDA began offering grants to improve rates
  - ▶ Wisconsin was at the 72% median rate
  - ▶ Qualified for funding

## Direct Cert Matching Rates: *Nationally and Wisconsin*



# Covering Wisconsin and Direct Cert

- ▶ From 2007-2011, worked with Wisconsin schools to address Medicaid health coverage education and outreach
  - ▶ Working directly with school staff, including food services
  - ▶ USDA allows meals application info for Medicaid outreach
  - ▶ Aware of school staff challenges in using administrative data
    - ▶ Technology skills
    - ▶ Staff turnover
    - ▶ Competing priorities
    - ▶ Family information privacy concerns
    - ▶ Early direct certification efforts



# Assessment of Wisconsin's Direct Cert

- ▶ Began in 2011
- ▶ Assess current challenges and how to improve state's rate
- ▶ Approach:
  - ▶ Surveyed schools on understanding, processes, challenges, and questions
  - ▶ Interviewed school admin, food service, DPI, and DCF staff
  - ▶ Conducted school site visits and observations of direct cert process
  - ▶ Reviewed other states' direct cert practices

# Initial Assessment of WI Challenges

Overall, very positive:

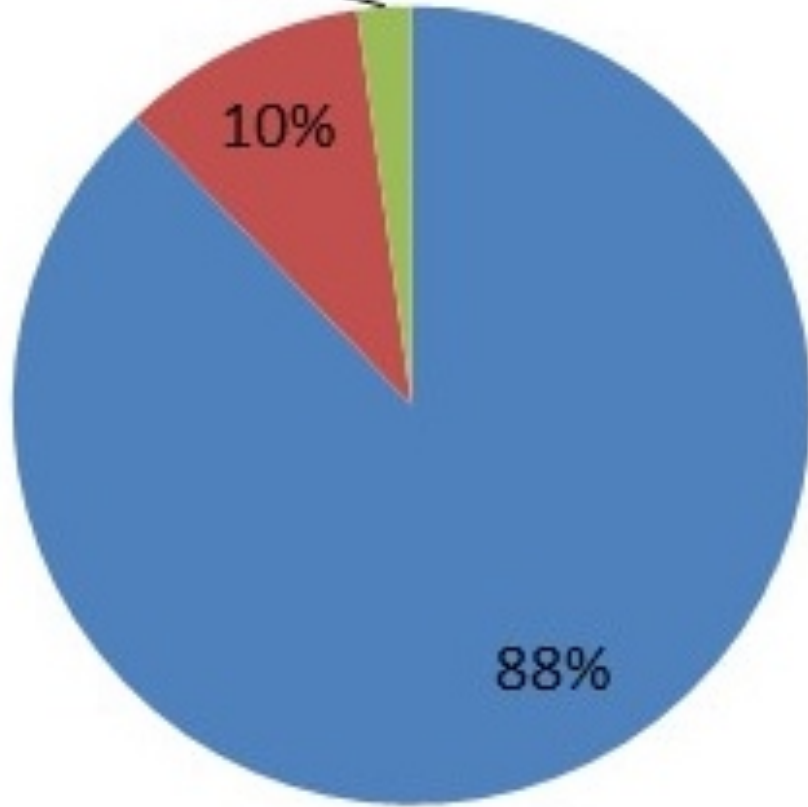
- ▶ Aware of DC and ability to run more than once per year (88% of survey respondents)
- ▶ Found the process “worthwhile” (interview)
- ▶ And “much less time consuming than paper applications” (interview)
- ▶ Say assistance provided by DPI and DCF was very helpful (interviews)
- ▶ Believed that DC was going well and surprised that Wisconsin wasn’t achieving a higher certification rate (interviews)

# Challenges

- ▶ Small schools that lack the resources to run DC
- ▶ Lack of training for new staff
- ▶ Multiple persons running DC and resulting miscommunication
- ▶ Running DC perceived to be too time consuming
- ▶ Resolving near-matches
- ▶ Misunderstanding DC versus paper application
- ▶ Not aware that should run DC more than once per year
- ▶ Multitude of software used with varying capabilities
- ▶ Frequent changes to USDA policy

## Aware Can Run Direct Certification >1x/Year

2%

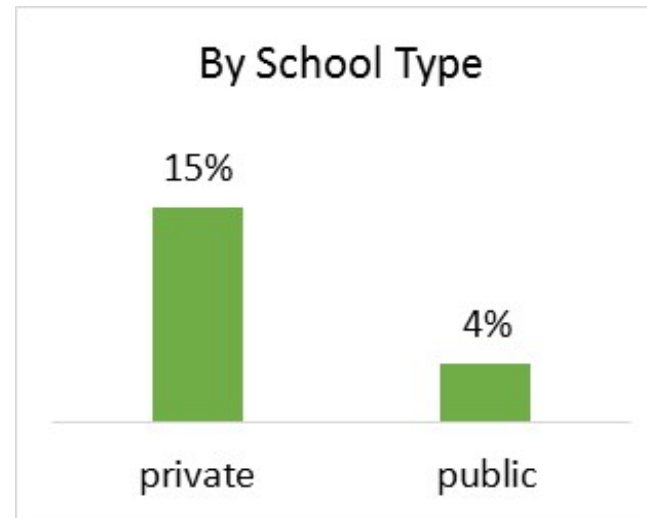
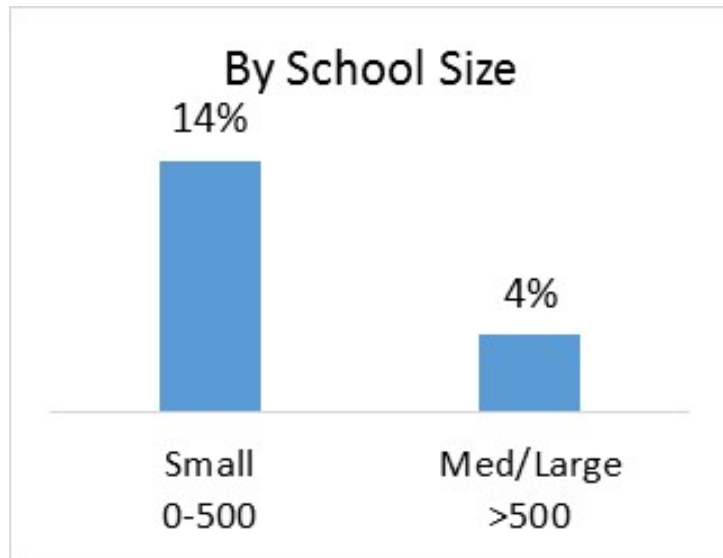
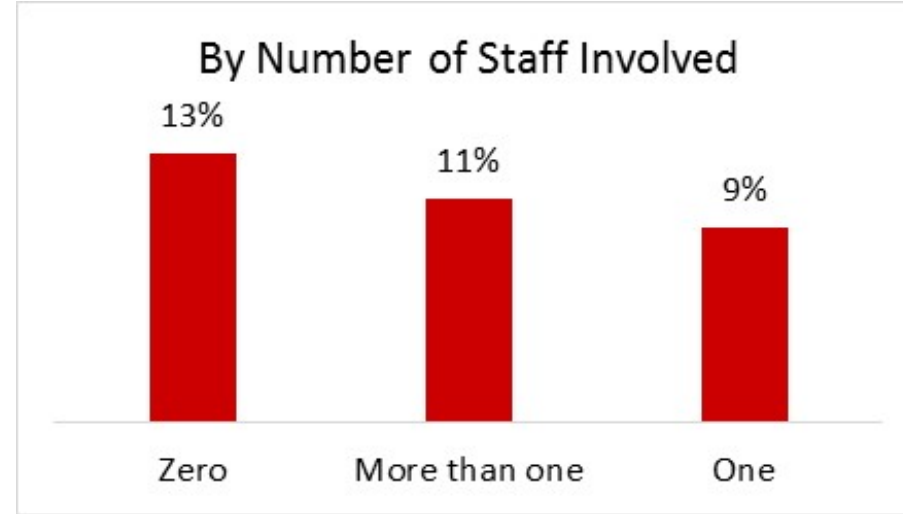
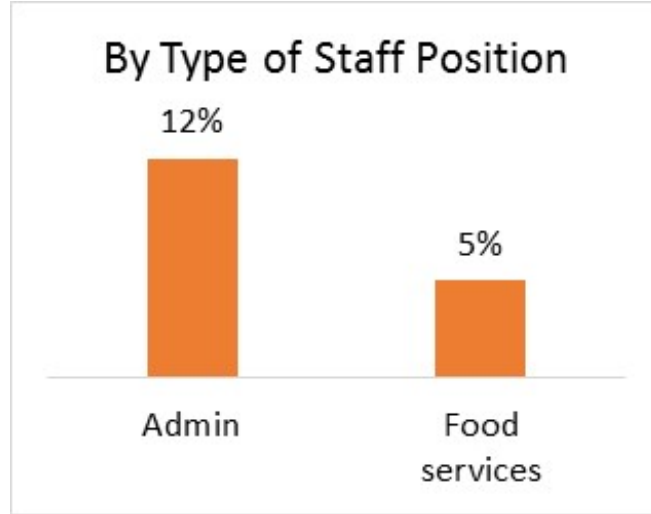


■ Yes

■ No

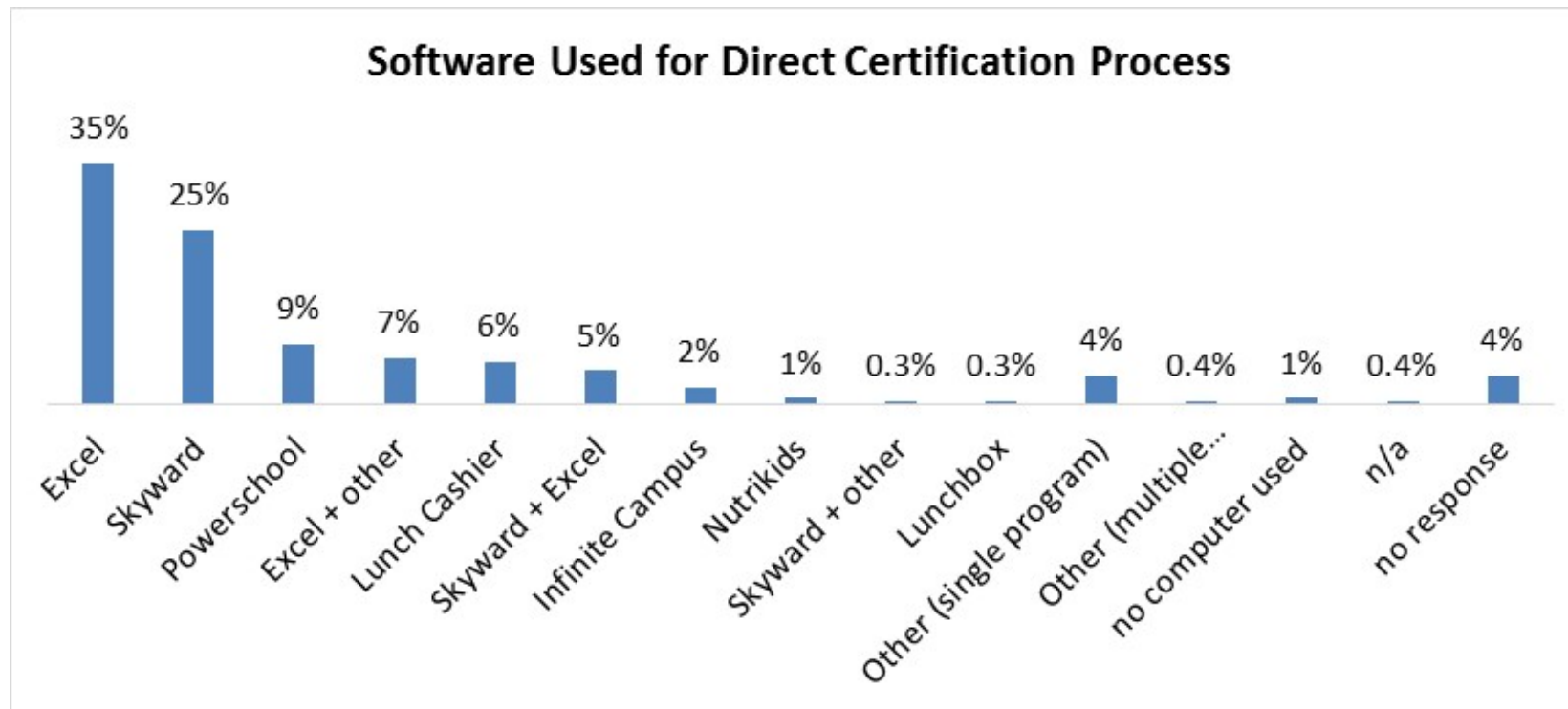
■ NR

# Percentage responding “No” (not aware)



# Technology and Software Challenges

- ▶ Survey respondents identified at least 40 different software programs
- ▶ Many use a combination of programs: 125 respondents (16%)
- ▶ Others were not sure or didn't answer: 41 (4.4%)



# Proposal for Improvement Grant

- ▶ Informational trainings, resources, and support
  - ▶ Annual trainings and new informational materials
  - ▶ Improve understanding of using various software for DC
  - ▶ Enhanced DPI materials and communications with schools
- ▶ New technology
  - ▶ Add new data matching fields and Soundex technology
  - ▶ Add foster care data for matching
- ▶ Evaluation and accountability
  - ▶ Ongoing school direct cert survey
  - ▶ Address school non-compliance with direct cert

# Outreach

- ▶ Print
- ▶ Electronic/Web-based
- ▶ In-Person




# Print

- ▶ USDA Eligibility Manual
- ▶ Direct Certification Manual
- ▶ DPI Memos
- ▶ Direct Certification Quick Guide
- ▶ Stickers
- ▶ Magnets
- ▶ Vendor manuals

# Electronic/Web








- ▶ Revised DPI website
- ▶ Covering Wisconsin Website
- ▶ Question of the Month
- ▶ FAQs
- ▶ Webinars
- ▶ Conference Calls
- ▶ YouTube Training Videos
- ▶ DPI Newsletter
- ▶ Local Newspapers (Public Announcements)
- ▶ Email
- ▶ Posting all print materials on DPI website

# Electronic/Web

Procurement	▼
Professional Standards	
Program Statistics	▼
School Breakfast Program	▼
SNACS	▼
SNT Communications	▼
SNT Training	▼
Staff Directory	
USDA Foods	▼
USDA Regulations and Guidance Memos	
Wellness Policy	▼
<b>Quick links</b>	
Wisconsin Child Nutrition Programs 	








## Direct Certification Materials

- [Eligibility Manual](#) 
- [School Code List - Public and Private Schools](#) 
- [DC Eligibility Codes](#) 
- [DC Parent Notification Letter](#)  [\(Spanish\)](#)  [\(Hmong\)](#) 
- [Template Student Enrollment List \(Excel\) for Direct Certification Run](#) 



## Direct Certification Training and Resources


- [Completing the DC process: An Overview](#)
- [DC User Guide](#) 
- [Direct Certification Web Access Request](#) 
- [DC FAQs](#) 
- [Software Help - Skyward](#) 
- [Software Help - Infinite Campus](#) 



## DPI and USDA Resources

- [Memos from current school year](#)
- [Archived memos](#)
- [Archived reports](#)

## Questions?

- Contact the DPI School Nutrition Team: [DPIFNS@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIFNS@dpi.wi.gov)  or (608) 267-9228

# In-Person

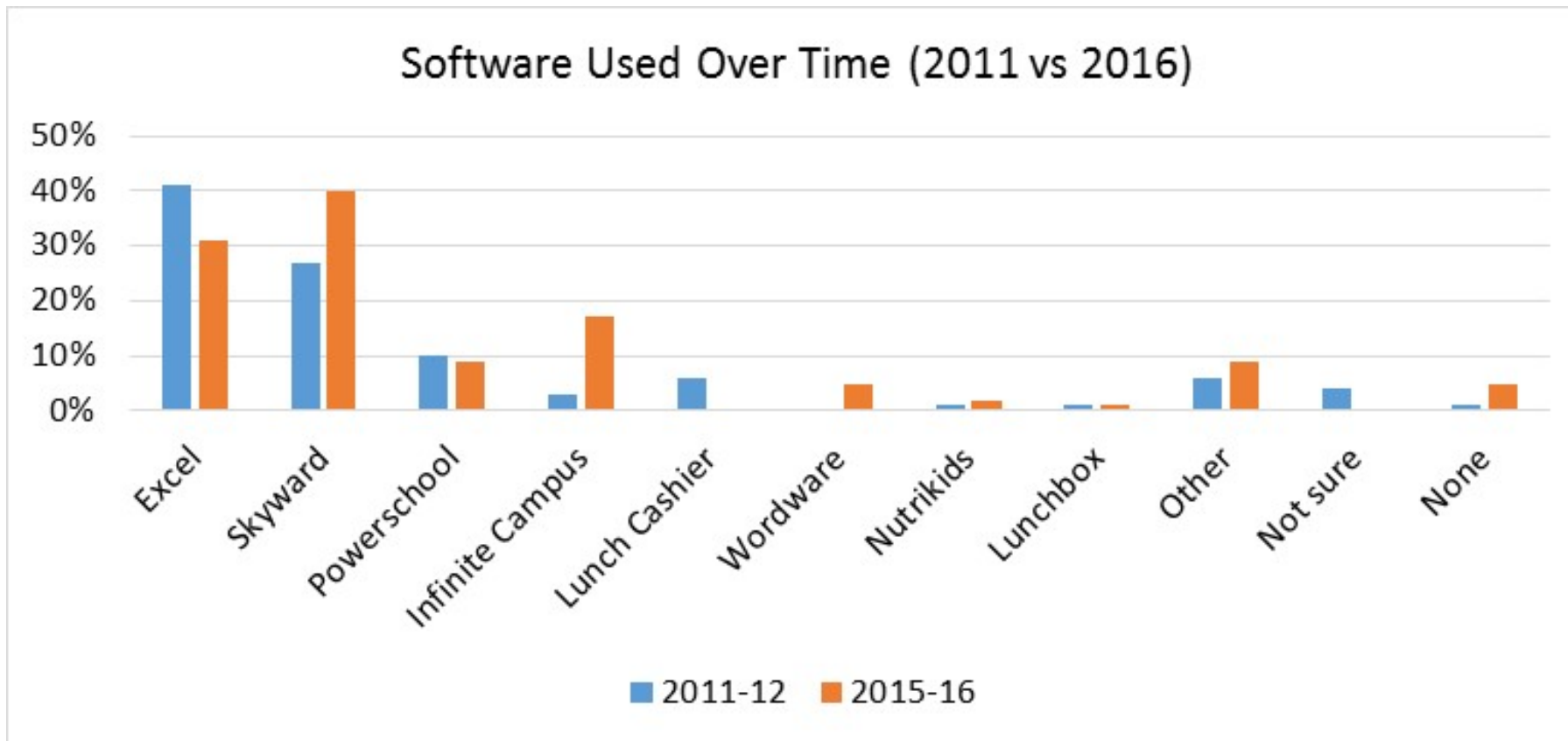
- ▶ DPI Summer Trainings
- ▶ Regular Site Visits
- ▶ Phonenumber
- ▶ On-site at DPI

# Implementation Findings

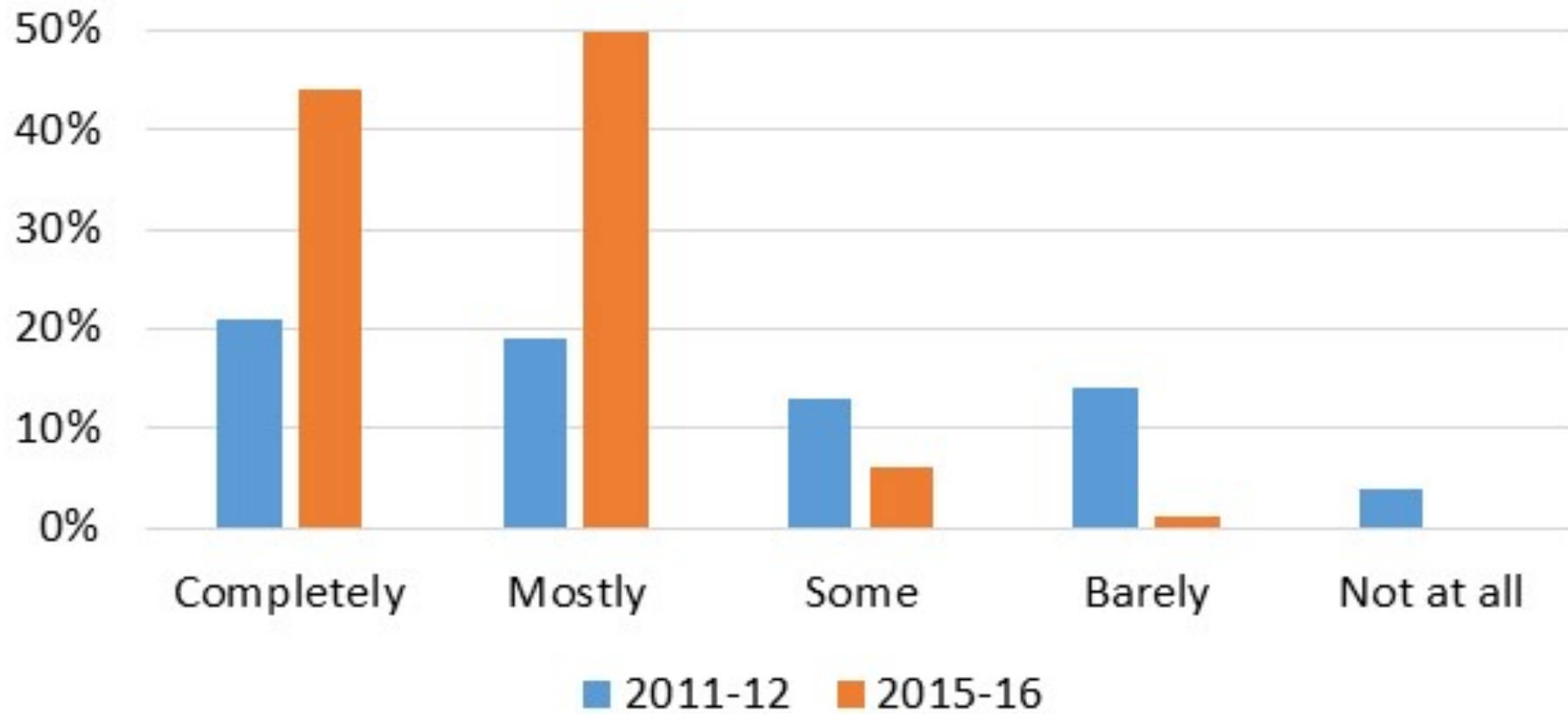
- ▶ Completing report and review of full implementation project in fall 2017
- ▶ Share what we have determined so far:
  - ▶ Overall impact
  - ▶ Level of understanding
  - ▶ Status of variability within:
    - ▶ Small schools
    - ▶ Software

# Variability: Software Used

- ▶ Between 2011 and 2016, consolidation of software programs being used
- ▶ However, still at least over 20 different programs

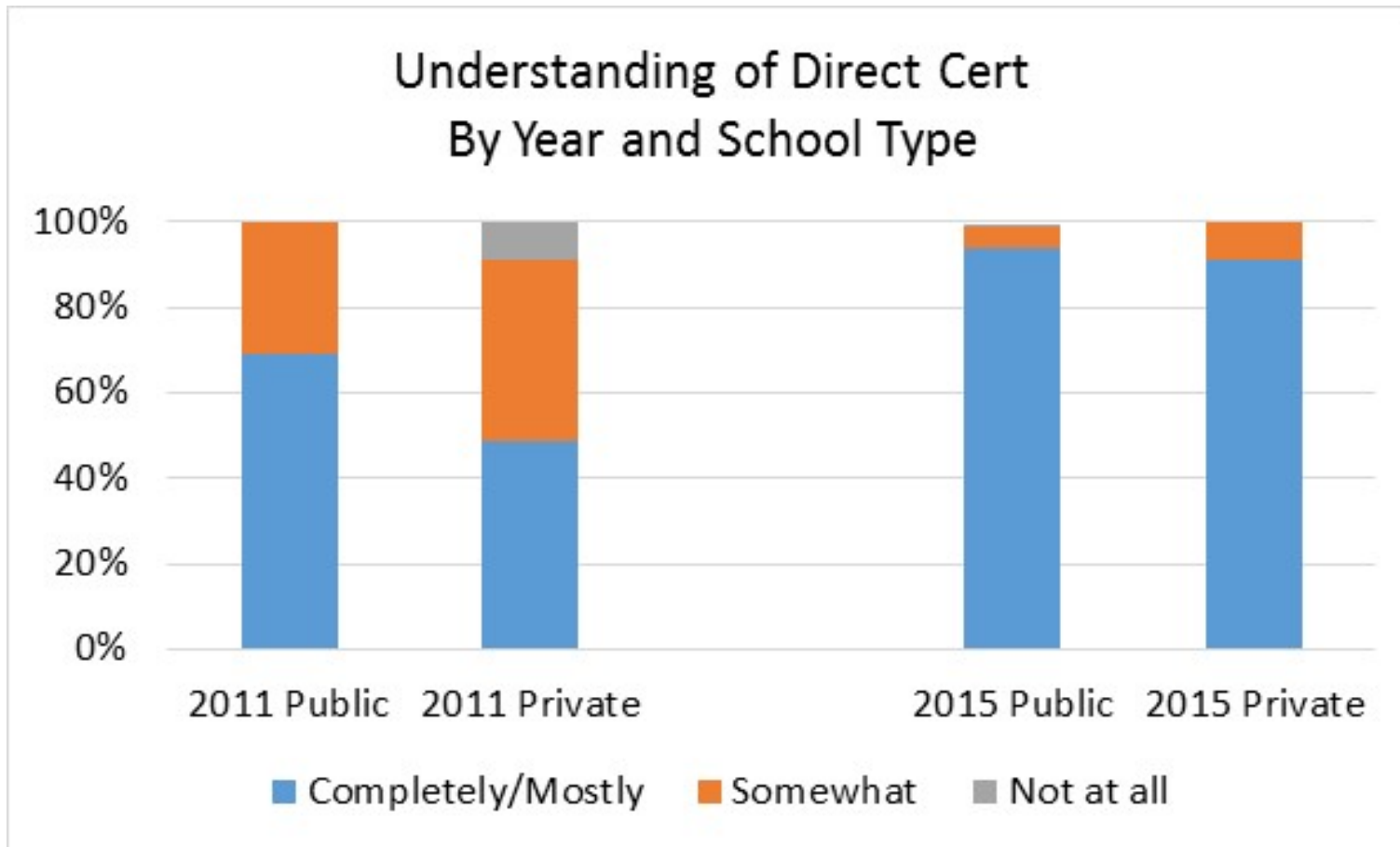


## Level of Understanding Over Time (2011 vs 2016)



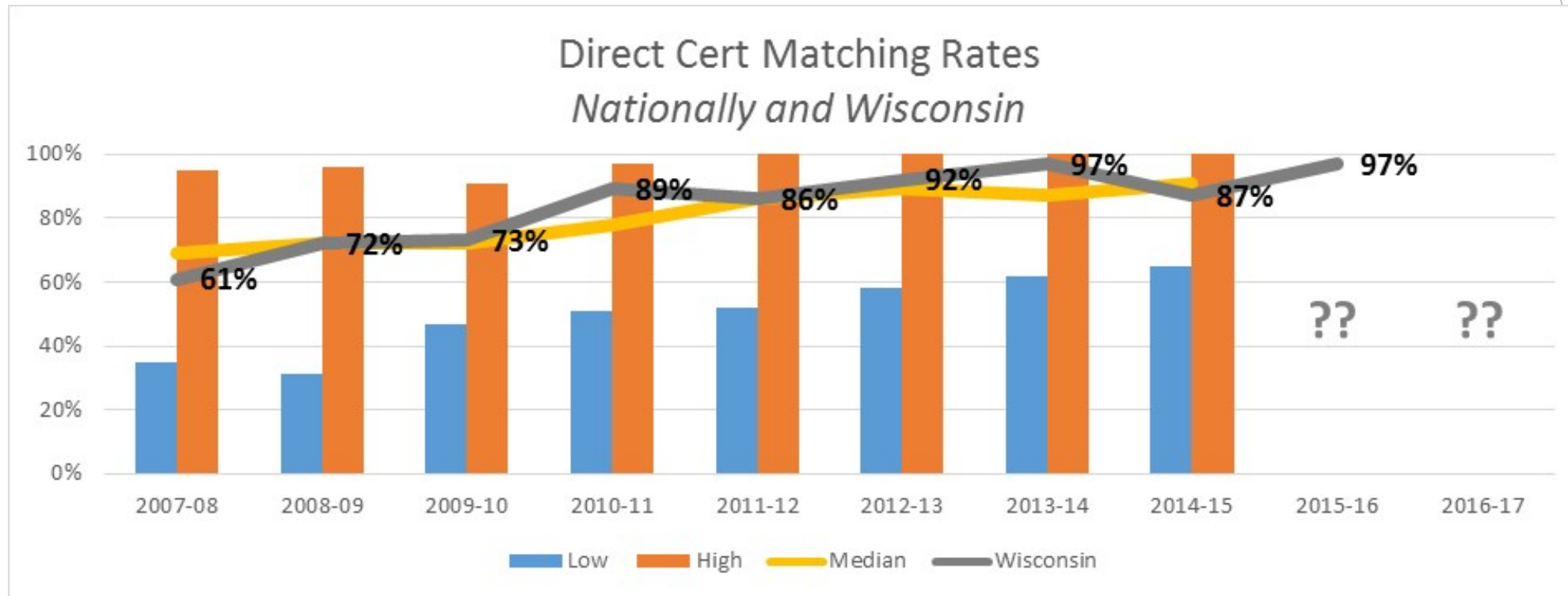
# Variability: School Type

- ▶ Initially, Private schools more challenges by DC
- ▶ By last year, that distinction had been reduced quite a bit





# Wisconsin's Direct Cert Match Rate



# Looking Ahead

- ▶ Outreach
- ▶ Policy
- ▶ Covering Wisconsin participation

# Ongoing Education and Communication

- ▶ DPI DC website
- ▶ Memos
- ▶ Trainings
- ▶ Phone and in-person assistance
- ▶ Webinars on special topics
- ▶ DC manual
- ▶ Software-specific manuals

# Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

- ▶ All students are offered free lunch and breakfast
- ▶ For high poverty schools
  - ▶ 40% or more must be directly certified
- ▶ Wisconsin's first year of participation was SY 2014-15
- ▶ Individual schools, groups of schools, or districts can participate
- ▶ Further reduces paperwork
  - ▶ Eliminates school meal application and even direct certification

# FDPIR

- ▶ In the 2016-2017 school year, USDA, DPI, and Covering WI reached out to a number of tribes in Wisconsin to discuss their participation in the Direct Certification program.
- ▶ We are currently working with the Menominee Tribe and hope to have FDPIR matching available to schools by the 2017-2018 school year.

# Direct Cert-Medicaid

- ▶ Including Medicaid-enrollee information for Direct Cert matching
- ▶ USDA approved Wisconsin pilot for 1 year, 2017-18
- ▶ 15 other states also doing
- ▶ In effect since 2012
- ▶ Offers opportunity to also directly certify for **reduced price meals**
- ▶ Ongoing national evaluation
- ▶ Thus far, 3-12% increase in DC match

# Acknowledgements

- ▶ Schools
- ▶ DPI school nutrition team
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