



## Food for Thought:

### *Expanding School Breakfast in New Jersey*

#### **Passaic Students Benefit from Classroom Breakfast Expansion Planned for 2012-13**

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The Passaic Board of Education began to serve breakfast in the classroom in one school in September 2011. The pilot went so well that by the end of the school year, six more schools joined the pilot – and plans call for nearly district-wide expansion in the 2012-13 school year.

Passaic City's Breakfast in the Classroom Program allows preschool, elementary-school and middle-school students to receive free breakfast in their respective classrooms right after school starts. This is different than many New Jersey districts, which tend to serve breakfast in the cafeteria before school starts, significantly reducing student participation.

Serving breakfast in the classroom has led to large increases in the number of Passaic students who participate in the federally-funded School Breakfast Program. For example, in School #11, the first school to pilot classroom breakfast, participation increased from 18 percent when the meal was served in the cafeteria before school to 85 percent after implementation of classroom breakfast.



Schools Superintendent Robert Holster shares a moment during classroom breakfast with a Passaic City elementary student.

With more students participating, many children no longer start their school day hungry. This has improved attention span, energy levels and productivity. Overall learning has improved. Children are also less likely to be absent and are generally healthier. We have also seen reduced tardiness and fewer trips to the school nurse.

A secondary benefit has been a substantial increase in federal reimbursements to the district. With 94 percent of students eligible for free and reduced meals, Passaic has realized a \$198,000 increase in federal

breakfast revenue from September 2011 through February 2012.

If we reach 100 percent participation, Passaic's **additional** federal reimbursement for the breakfast program could be nearly \$2.9 million a year, according to data provided by Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

### Classroom Breakfast Expansion Planned

Because of this successful pilot, we are expanding classroom breakfast. With the **support** of all stakeholders, especially the principals, we expect to serve classroom breakfast in **all** 14 elementary schools, as well as the Lincoln Middle School in the 2012-2013 school year.



“Serving breakfast in the classroom has been a huge success in Passaic,” said Karen De Lamater, School Nutrition Director. “At first, teachers, principals and others were concerned about clean-up and lost instructional time. As it turned out, it was very easy to deal with those issues and the payoff for students, teachers and parents has been tremendous.”

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