



The New Jersey Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign

Survey: Some NJ Schools Overcome School Breakfast Barriers

By Anup Khatri and Nancy Parello

Executive Summary

A survey of nearly 300 New Jersey school districts found that serving breakfast after school starts is doable and benefits children, teachers and schools.

About 38 percent of responding districts said they serve breakfast after school starts. Known as “breakfast after the bell,” this approach significantly increases student participation in the federal School Breakfast Program and ensures more needy children start their school day with a full stomach.

By contrast, most New Jersey districts continue to serve breakfast before school when most students have not yet arrived.

Districts that are serving breakfast after the bell said they were able to easily overcome perceived challenges, including cost, clean-up and lost instructional time.

These respondents also reported significant benefits for students and school staff. The top benefit cited

was that students are able to concentrate better with a full stomach. New Jersey school officials also reported fewer trips to the school nurse and less disruptive classroom behavior.

The majority of survey respondents, however, still serve breakfast before school starts, when bus and family schedules and other factors prevent children from participating in this federal child nutrition program.



Learn more about the NJ Food for Thought Campaign by visiting njschoolbreakfast.org

The survey was conducted by the NJ Food For Thought School Breakfast Campaign, a statewide partnership to boost

school breakfast participation, led by Advocates for Children of New Jersey and the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition. New Jersey is nearly last in the nation for serving just 30 percent of eligible students.

The survey gathered more information about school breakfast in New Jersey to assist efforts to expand school breakfast participation.

This report was produced by Advocates for Children of New Jersey

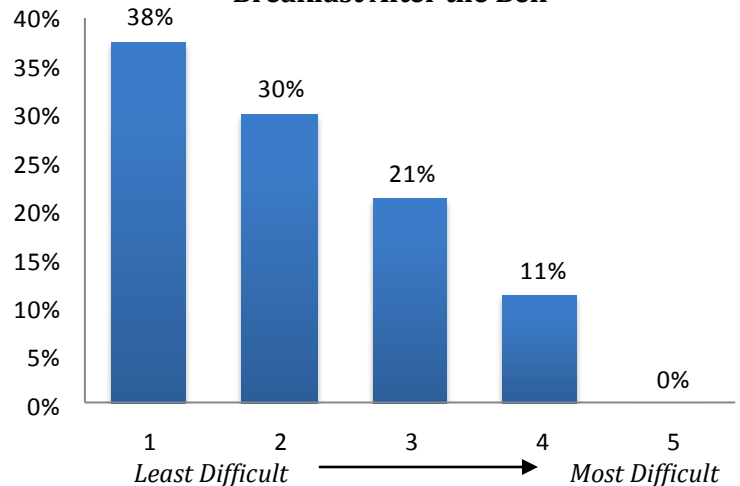
Breakfast Basics

Of the nearly 300 districts that responded to the survey, 88 percent reported serving breakfast in school. Just 37 districts reported not serving breakfast, primarily because they had a small number of children eligible for free/reduce price school meals.

Caution should be used in extrapolating these data statewide since districts with breakfast programs were more likely to respond to the survey.

In March 2012, 392 districts served school breakfast, according to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, which administers the program on a statewide level. The department does not currently track how these schools serve breakfast, but plans to begin capturing these data in the coming school year, according to department officials.

Level of Difficulty Cited in Implementing Breakfast After the Bell



“Grab-and-go” was the next most common model used by 13 percent of districts. With this model, meals are distributed from carts, allowing children to “grab” a nutritious breakfast and “go” to their first class.

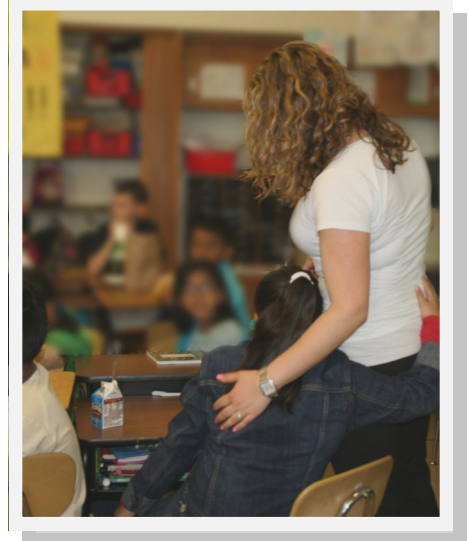
Just 3 percent offered a “second chance” breakfast, which is typically used in high schools and provides a nutrition break sometime during the morning schedule.

Roughly 28 percent of districts reported using a combination of these service models.

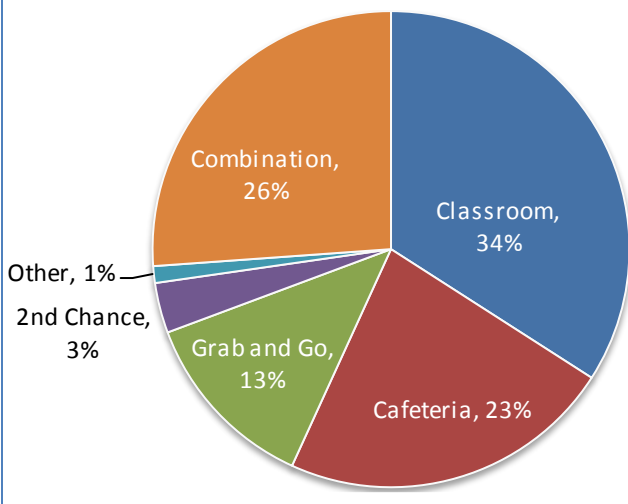
Meeting the School Breakfast Challenge

Districts were able to overcome obstacles to implementing breakfast after the bell.

The most common challenges they met were teacher resistance and concerns over lost instructional time. About 48 percent of respondents cited



How Districts Serve Breakfast After the Bell



All percentages used in this report refer to the percent of respondents who answered that particular question

Serving Breakfast After the Bell

Of the districts that reported serving breakfast, 38 percent – or 93 districts – serve breakfast after school starts. In these districts, about one-third served breakfast in the classroom, while 23 percent served breakfast in the cafeteria after school starts.

these two difficulties. Concern over clean-up was the next most common issue at 44 percent. About 15 percent faced cost issues.

Meeting these challenges proved relatively easy. Roughly 68 percent of respondents rated the difficulty of implementing breakfast after the bell as very low (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale). No districts reported great difficulty (5) when implementing breakfast after the bell.

Comments from survey respondents suggest that a key to success is a commitment from all school staff — from the school board and superintendent to teachers and custodians — to make the program work. Clearly communicating the benefits of breakfast and how the logistics would be handled were also critical to implementing successful school breakfast programs, survey respondents said. **(See sidebar for a sampling of responses).**

Breakfast Benefits Kids, Schools

Many respondents also said the benefits of serving breakfast to more children significantly outweighed any logistical concerns.

Forty-eight percent said they saw an increase in stu-

Nearly half of respondents reported students were able to concentrate better on their school work.



How Districts Met the School Breakfast Challenge

“We discussed the benefits and told everyone that it’s a one-year trial to see if it works, and I think everyone was surprised about how well it’s going.”

“We got buy-in from the board and rolled out one school at a time.”

“By assuring them it would only take very little time and it would not interfere with their regular day. That it would take 10-15 minutes.”

“We overcame many of the challenges by having an open dialogue with all personnel involved in the process.”

“Pilot sites and then shared success stories.”

“Developed a consensus and buy-in with teachers and staff.”

“By communicating the importance of breakfast to all staff members. Additionally, cafeteria and custodial staff work as a team.”

dents’ ability to concentrate on their school work, while 40 percent noted a drop in student visits to the school nurse. In addition, 35 percent reported improved academic performance and less disruptive behavior from students.

Challenges Ahead

Unfortunately, roughly 62 percent of respondents are still serving breakfast before school, which is ineffective in reaching children who come to school hungry and need a healthy meal to focus in class and succeed in school.

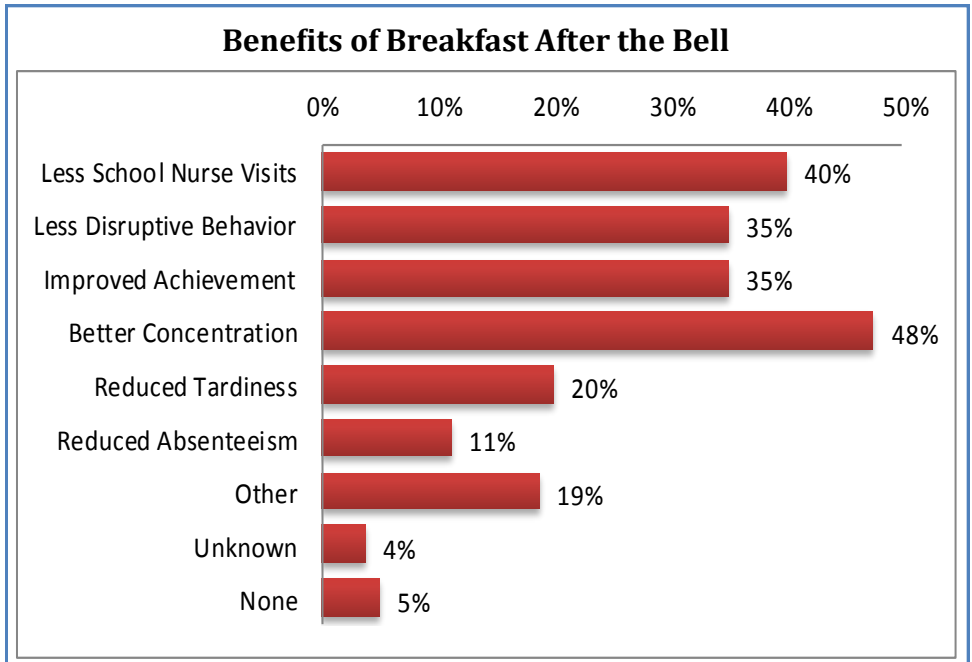
What's more, just 26 percent of these 150 districts report that school officials in their district have considered implementing breakfast after the bell.

Respondents said that clean-up concerns are the most common reason why their district has not implemented breakfast after the bell, with 68 percent citing this issue. The next most frequent concern was the potential of lost instructional time. It should be noted that in January 2012, the state Departments of Education and Agriculture issued a joint statement that encouraged districts to adopt breakfast after the bell models and stated that breakfast time can count as instructional time.

Other common issues included teacher resistance and cost concerns, cited by 34 and 29 percent of districts, respectively.

Advocacy Assistance Needed

To gain a better understanding of ways to overcome these barriers, the survey asked respondents to identify the type of assistance they need to implement breakfast after the bell. Interestingly, the most common need was advocacy assistance in convincing school boards, administrators, teachers and others that breakfast after the bell is both beneficial and doable, with 40 percent citing this assistance.



This speaks to the need to educate school officials about the importance of school breakfast and how districts can meet the logistical challenges of serving breakfast after the bell.



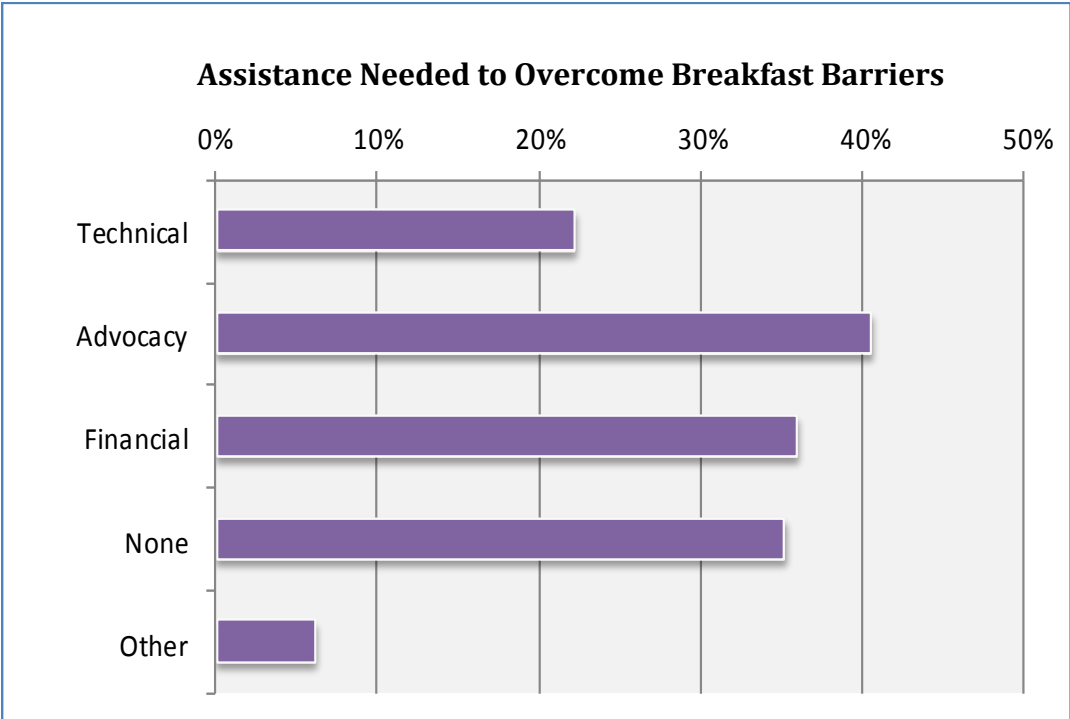
Financial assistance was the next most common need at 36 percent, while 22 percent said technical assistance would help them to implement breakfast after the bell.

Fueling School Breakfast Expansion

Statewide and local efforts are underway to help New

Jersey districts overcome the logistical concerns of serving breakfast after the bell. This will significantly increase student participation in this critical child nutrition program, allowing districts to realize the many benefits of an effective school breakfast program.

Led by Advocates for Children of New Jersey and the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition, the **NJ Food For Thought School Breakfast** campaign is driven by a statewide steering committee that includes New Jersey anti-hunger, education and health organizations, state agencies and child advocates. The Food Research Action Center and the American Dairy Association and Council are the campaign's national partners.



The campaign has set a goal to increase school breakfast participation by 30 percent by June 2013. The campaign is already returning results, with efforts underway in Paterson, Passaic, Union City, Camden and Trenton, among others, to implement breakfast after the bell.

Through our collective efforts, New Jersey can emerge as a leader in ensuring that every child begins their school day with a healthy meal.

About the Survey

The New Jersey school breakfast survey was developed by the statewide steering committee of the Food for Thought school breakfast campaign. The survey was distributed electronically to food services directors, business administrators and other school officials responsible for their districts' school meals program to every New Jersey school district, using the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's list serve and website.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey compiled and analyzed the survey results and produced this report, with support from The Community Foundation of New Jersey, the Walmart Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Special thanks to the Department of Agriculture for its assistance with this project.

For more information about this report and school breakfast, contact Nancy Parello at nparello@acnj.org or visit www.njschoolbreakfast.org.

**Food For Thought
NJ School Breakfast Statewide Steering
Committee**

Advocates for Children of New Jersey	NJ Charter School Association
American Dairy Association & Dairy Council, Inc.	NJ Department of Agriculture
Food Research and Action Center	NJ Department of Education
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry, NJ Synod, ELCA	NJ Department of Health
Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association	NJ Education Association
NJ Action for Healthy Kids/AtlantiCare	NJ Partnership for Healthy Kids
NJ Anti-Hunger Coalition	NJ Principal and Supervisors Association
NJ Association of School Administrators	NJ Parent Teachers Association
	NJ School Boards Association
	NJ School Nutrition Association