

Food For Thought: Expanding School Breakfast to NJ Students Hudson County Profile, 2015



School Breakfast NJ County Rankings

County	2015 Percent of Eligible Students Receiving Breakfast	2015 Rank	2014 Rank
Passaic	70	1	13
Cumberland	54	2	1
Essex	51	3	3
Camden	50	4	5
Hudson	50	5	4
Cape May	48	6	2
Atlantic	48	7	7
Somerset	48	8	9
Middlesex	48	9	6
Union	44	10	11
Salem	43	11	17
Gloucester	40	12	16
Monmouth	39	13	10
Ocean	37	14	14
Warren	37	15	8
Mercer	34	16	12
Burlington	32	17	15
Morris	30	18	20
Sussex	27	19	18
Bergen	25	20	19
Hunterdon	2	21	21

Sources: ACNJ calculated the above ranks using NJ Department of Education October 2014 enrollment counts to determine the number of eligible children and NJ Department of Agriculture school breakfast participation data, April 2015.

Breakfast After the Bell Fuels Increases in School Breakfast

Everyone agrees that children need to start their school day with a full stomach. After years of being nearly last in the nation for its participation in the federal School Breakfast Program, New Jersey has shown strong improvement over the past five years.

In 2015, the state moved to 28th nationally, compared to its previous ranking of 46th for student participation in this critical child nutrition program. This progress is the result of a growing number of New Jersey districts switching to serving “breakfast after the bell,” rather than before school, when most students have not yet arrived.

This approach, typically done in the classroom during the first few minutes of the school day, significantly boosts participation, giving more kids the nutritious start to the school day that can help them concentrate and learn.

Since the program is federally funded, most districts with high concentrations of low-income children can feed all students at little or no extra cost, leveraging the considerable investment New Jersey makes in public education.

As part of the NJ Food for Thought Campaign, Advocates for Children of New Jersey each year compiles breakfast participation data for every New Jersey school district with at least 20 percent of children eligible for free- or reduced-price breakfast. These districts are required by state law to offer breakfast at school.

Following is the news release and profile for Hudson County and ways local advocates can use this information to increase school breakfast participation.

For more information, visit njschoolbreakfast.org.

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Hudson County

2015 Rank

5

2014 Rank: 4

Recognizing that hunger is a major barrier to learning, New Jersey school leaders have made great progress in recent years in serving breakfast to more low-income students. From 2010 to 2015, New Jersey schools posted a 75 percent increase in the number of low-income students eating breakfast at school, primarily by serving “breakfast after the bell,” usually in the classroom. While encouraging, nearly 300,000 NJ students are still missing out on this morning meal that can help them concentrate and learn.

To help identify districts with low participation that would benefit from more effective breakfast programs, Advocates for Children of New Jersey provides this district-by-district breakdown of breakfast participation rates and the additional federal dollars districts would receive if 100 percent of eligible children participated.

School Breakfast Participation, April 2015

School District	# of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Breakfast	Eligible Students as % of Total Enrollment	% of Eligible Students Receiving Breakfast	# Eligible Students NOT Receiving Breakfast	Total Possible Federal Reimbursement*
Bayonne	6,239	65	45	3,436	\$943,522
Beloved Community Charter School	436	73	74	115	\$30,762
Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School	328	89	48	172	\$47,189
East Newark	222	84	66	75	\$20,628
Great Futures Charter High School For The Health Sciences	84	67	15	71	\$20,030
Guttenberg	761	78	8	701	\$195,908
Harrison	1,705	81	48	895	\$245,196
Hoboken Charter School	77	27	27	56	\$15,278
Hoboken	1,178	62	24	891	\$246,380
Jersey City	21,854	79	63	8,156	\$2,257,034
Jersey City Community Charter School	498	86	38	309	\$85,450
Jersey City Global Charter School	96	41	19	78	\$20,779
Jersey City Golden Door Charter School	352	66	22	274	\$73,822
Kearny	3,401	58	8	3,117	\$857,369
Learning Community Charter school	186	32	15	158	\$42,397
M.E.T.S. Charter School	373	70	46	203	\$54,223
North Bergen	5,732	71	26	4,261	\$1,178,510
Secaucus	632	29	43	363	\$96,433
Soaring Heights Charter School	121	51	7	112	\$29,477
The Ethical Community Charter School	115	37	99	1	\$284
Union City	10,877	92	60	4,304	\$1,163,254
University Academy Charter School	323	76	23	249	\$68,062
Weehawken	643	48	18	530	\$145,332
West New York	6,351	76	52	3,023	\$851,965
TOTAL/AVERAGE	62,584	74	50	31,550	\$8,689,286

Note: This chart excludes school districts with fewer than 20 percent eligible students. Eligibility data for the Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School came directly from school officials.

Sources: New Jersey Departments of Education and Agriculture, compiled by Advocates for Children of New Jersey. This chart excludes data from the Special Services Commission and vocational districts because accurate data were not available for these types of districts.

* This represents the federal dollars districts would receive if every eligible child received a school breakfast all 180 days of the school year. These funds can only be used for breakfast expenses.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hudson County Drops to 5th for School Breakfast Participation

Hudson County dropped from 4th to 5th place for the number of low-income children eating breakfast at school, with Hudson public schools feeding half of eligible children, according to county profiles released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

About three-quarters of Hudson students – about 62,600 children – are eligible to receive free- and reduced-priced school meals. While the county is doing better than the statewide average of 44 percent, nearly 31,600 low-income Hudson County children are still not receiving breakfast at school.

Hudson's student participation rates ranged from a high of 99 percent at The Ethical Community Charter School to a low of 7 percent at the Soaring Heights Charter School. Both Jersey City and Union City, two districts with the county's highest number of low-income children, fed more than 20,000 eligible students combined. On the other hand, with more than half of their students living in low-income households, Guttenberg and Kearny both had a low participation rate of 8 percent.

Statewide, New Jersey has seen a 75 percent increase in the number of New Jersey students receiving a healthy breakfast at school, rising from about 136,000 children in October 2010 to 237,000 in April 2015. This is primarily due to a growing number of districts serving "breakfast after the bell," during the first few minutes of the school day, which significantly boosts breakfast participation.

New Jersey districts are expected to collect \$92 million in federal reimbursements for school meals as a result of this increase, according to the FY 2016 state budget. If Hudson County achieved 100 percent participation of students eligible for free- and reduced-priced school breakfast, the county's school districts would receive nearly \$8.7 million in additional federal dollars each year to provide school breakfast to students, according to state statistics compiled by ACNJ.

ACNJ also released its 5th annual NJ Food for Thought School Breakfast Report, along with the district-level data today at the Fred W. Martin School in Jersey City, which is now serving breakfast after the bell in all of the district's schools.

Before making this change three years ago, only 18 percent of eligible Jersey City students benefited from school breakfast during the 2011-12 school year. Now, the district is serving 63 percent of eligible students. The increase in federal meal reimbursements has allowed the district to cover the cost of providing free breakfast to all Jersey City students, school officials said.

Jersey City Superintendent Marcia Lyles said the students are benefiting from having breakfast each morning and that many of our educators have expressed strong support for the program.

“The students are more focused and ready to learn,” Lyles said. “Initially, there were concerns that the program would be disruptive, however our talented and dedicated staff found ways to make it work for children. As a district, we have systems in place that are running smoothly. Everyone is working together to ensure that all of our students have the nutrition they need to succeed in school.”

ACNJ releases district-level data to help school and local officials, county leaders, parents and others identify districts that are doing well on this front – and those that need to rise up to meet the school breakfast challenge.

“It is our hope that local, county and state officials and advocates will use this information to convince school boards and superintendents that expanding school breakfast makes sense for children, their districts and the state as a whole,” Zalkind said.

The NJ Food for Thought Campaign is a statewide effort to increase the number of students eating breakfast at school. The coalition includes New Jersey anti-hunger, education and health organizations, the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture, Education and Health and child advocates. The Food Research Action Center, the American Dairy Association and Council and the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council are the campaign’s national partners.

“This successful campaign has resulted in more students starting their school day with a healthy meal, while bringing additional federal dollars into the state and leveraging the considerable investment we make in public education,” Zalkind said. “Our children need and deserve this healthy start to their school day.”

For more information, visit www.njschoolbreakfast.org.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey is a statewide, non-profit child research and action organization committed to ensuring that every child has the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

Food For Thought: Expanding School Breakfast to NJ Students



Join the campaign to expand school breakfast in New Jersey...

A growing number of New Jersey school districts are adopting innovative approaches to serving breakfast to children in school. These districts have met logistical concerns over instructional time and clean-up. School officials that serve “breakfast after the bell” report significant increases in participation rates and improved student behavior and performance. Plus, these districts are claiming more federal dollars to feed hungry kids.

ACNJ provides this district-level data on school breakfast participation to assist school officials and advocates in implementing more effective breakfast programs. ACNJ is a leader of the NJ Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign, which has compiled a host of advocacy and implementation resources on its website, www.njschoolbreakfast.org.

You can use this information to influence change in your community by presenting the report and data to your:

- School board
- Superintendent, business administrator and food services coordinator
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA or PTO)
- Local community and government agencies that can become partners in your campaign

You can also help by becoming a supporter of ACNJ’s Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign at www.njschoolbreakfast.org . Need help or more info? E-mail Reginald Dorsey at rdorsey.acnj.org.