



Food for Thought: *Expanding School Breakfast in New Jersey*

A Testimonial from a Newark Principal: School Breakfast Builds Character

By Laura Fasbach Donovan

As a long-time educator in Newark, principal Kathy Duke-Jackson always knew the benefits of a full stomach on a child's academic performance and behavior.

But after the district began serving breakfast in the classroom after school starts in 2004, Duke-Jackson soon realized the program was not only giving students a lesson in good nutrition. It was also helping to develop their character.

"It's more than just breakfast," says Duke-Jackson, the head administrator at the First Avenue School in Newark's North Ward. "It's also about responsibility."

Each morning, student volunteers report to the school's cafeteria to pick up bins packed with breakfast and deliver them to classrooms throughout the pre-K through 8th grade school. Once inside the class, students hand out the pre-packaged meals to their classmates and oversee clean-up when everyone is finished eating.

"I think every school has the opportunity to incorporate this leadership piece into



Principal Kathy Duke-Jackson

their breakfast programs," says Duke-Jackson.

To be sure, breakfast in the classroom at First Avenue School is not a time for students to socialize, but rather to begin academic lessons or listen to announcements while they quietly eat. Duke-Jackson says breakfast generally runs from 8:20 to 8:40 every morning and students learn to be efficient.

"We make sure we don't waste time," the principal says. "The children are very organized about it and they understand the timeframe."