

OCTOBER 2012

Food for Thought:

2nd Annual New Jersey School Breakfast Report



Passaic City Superintendent Robert H. Holster shares a moment with a student during the district's classroom breakfast.

Giving Every Child A Chance

35 Halsey Street, 2nd Floor, Newark, NJ 07102 • (973) 643-3876 • Fax (973) 643-9153 • advocates@acnj.org •

www.acnj.org

About the NJ Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign

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 the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture, Education and Health, anti-hunger and health groups and New Jersey's major education associations, as well as national partners.

The campaign's goal is to boost participation in the federal School Breakfast Program by 30 percent by June 2013. By achieving this goal, about 40,000 more children will get a healthy breakfast each school day.

The statewide committee is working to build widespread support for school breakfast expansion, as well as assisting local efforts to expand participation. Currently, efforts are underway in Paterson, Trenton, Union City and Camden.

For more information, visit www.njschoolbreakfast.org.

Cecilia Zalkind, *Executive Director*
Mary Coogan, *Assistant Director*

2012 ACNJ BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Richard Trenk
President, Board of Trustees

John Boyne
Naim Bulbulia
Timothy Carden
Brenda Considine
Hendricks Davis
Louise Eagle
Maurice Elias
Vito Gagliardi
Stuart Grant
Gail Houlihan

Nancy Lauter
Eileen Leahey
Matthew Loncar
Yvonne Lopez
Valerie Mauriello
Margaret McLeod
Jennifer Mermans
Maria Pinho
Clare Sapienza-Eck
Kendell Spratt
Robert Sterling
Gerard Thiers
Charles Venti



35 Halsey Street
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 643-3876
(973) 643-9153 (fax)
advocates@acnj.org

NJ Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign

Statewide Steering Committee

Advocates for Children of New Jersey, (Co-chair)
American Dairy Association & Dairy Council, Inc.
Food Research and Action Center
Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association
NJ Action for Healthy Kids/AtlantiCare
NJ Anti-Hunger Coalition (Co-chair)
NJ Association of School Administrators
NJ Charter School Association
NJ Department of Agriculture
NJ Department of Education
NJ Department of Health
NJ Education Association
NJ Partnership for Healthy Kids
NJ Principal and Supervisors Association
NJ PTA
NJ School Boards Association
NJ School Nutrition Association

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the New Jersey Departments of Education and Agriculture for providing the data used in this report and for their continued support and assistance on the school breakfast campaign.

ACNJ Kids Count Coordinator Nicole Hellriegel, Multi-media Coordinator Lana Lee and Senior Policy Analyst Sheldon Presser contributed to this report.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey's work on the school breakfast project is made possible through the generous support of the Community Foundation of New Jersey, the Walmart Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Fund for New Jersey.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF NEW JERSEY



Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/acnjforkids
Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/acnjforkids

Advocates for Children of New Jersey is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 30 years. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. And it means that more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

www.acnj.org

New Jersey Makes Progress in Serving Students Breakfast

Many Districts Still Lag with Low Participation

By Laura Donovan and Nancy Parello

Executive Summary

More New Jersey children are eating a healthy breakfast at school, as a growing number of school districts are serving breakfast after school starts. This approach significantly boosts student participation in this federal child nutrition program and helps children succeed in school.

Long behind the national curve on school breakfast, New Jersey saw a 21 percent increase in the number of children from low-income families receiving breakfast at school from October 2010 to March 2012.

During this time, more districts have implemented “breakfast after the bell,” in which students eat breakfast right after school starts, typically in either the classroom or the cafeteria.

The increase in school breakfast participation means that nearly 29,000 additional children across New Jersey are getting a healthy breakfast every single school day, translating to an estimated 5 million more meals served over the course of the school year and millions more in federal funding flowing into New Jersey school districts.

As child poverty grows in New Jersey, more children live in families struggling to make ends meet and more districts are recognizing that feeding children is a key part of helping students achieve academic success.

New Jersey spends billions of local and state tax dollars each year on public education. The School Breakfast Program is federally-funded so districts incur little or no cost when they feed more hungry children, improving their chances of school success.

Expanding school breakfast participation, then, significantly leverages the substantial investment that New Jersey makes in public education and makes smart sense for children, schools and our public education system.

More Work Remains

Despite the progress, just 35 percent of the 471,714 children eligible for free- or reduced-price breakfast actually received it in March 2012.

Nearly all school districts with 20 percent or more eligible children have a breakfast program, as required by state law. But, far too many of these districts still serve breakfast before school starts when children have not yet arrived at school. This is an ineffective way to deliver breakfast to hungry children. Bus and family schedules and other factors often prevent children from arriving at school with enough time to eat before the first bell rings.

Serving breakfast after the bell is a more effective way to ensure children get a healthy meal at the start of their school day.

The Growing Need

In 2010, nearly one in three New Jersey children — 619,000 — lived in families that earn too little to meet their basic needs — a 14 percent increase since 2006.

During roughly the same time, New Jersey households without enough food rose an alarming 56 percent, coupled with a steep 76 percent jump in the number of children receiving food stamps.

In addition, a recent national survey of 1,000 K-8 teachers found that many students come to school hungry. ***Hunger In Our Schools: Share Our Strength's Teachers Report 2012*** report found:

- 3 out of 5 teachers say they have children in their classrooms who regularly come to school hungry.
- 4 out of 5 of those teachers say these children come to school hungry at least once a week.

A majority of teachers who see hunger as a problem believe the problem is growing. They also said that hunger is a major barrier to learning, according to the survey.

The School Breakfast Program is available to children living in low-income families. A family of four earning less than \$30,000 qualifies for free school meals, while a family of four earning about \$42,000 a year qualifies for reduced-price meals.

Breakfast Champions: The Top 20

Districts with high concentrations of students living in low-income families can benefit most from effective school breakfast programs. To spotlight high-poverty districts that are successfully serving breakfast, ACNJ identified the top 20 districts with the highest percent of eligible students eating breakfast among all districts with 50 percent or more children qualified to receive free- and reduced-price school meals.

The average participation rate in these 20 districts was 72 percent in March 2012 — more than double the state average of 27 percent. These districts served nearly 44,500 children — or about 38 percent of all children receiving school breakfast that month.

The top three performers were the Community Charter School of Paterson, Wildwood and Perth Amboy. All 20 districts should be commended for their efforts to ensure that their students begin the school day with a healthy meal.

The Benefits of Breakfast After the Bell

When children eat school breakfast, research shows the following results:

- Better academic performance
- Less disruptive student behavior
- Fewer trips to the school nurse
- Increased attendance
- Reduced tardiness



Easy-to-serve, low-sugar cereal is a school breakfast staple.

Table 1: Breakfast Champions
Top 20 districts of those with 50% or more eligible children

District	Number of Students Eligible for Free- and Reduced-Price School Meals	Percent Eligible Students Served
Community Charter School of Paterson	228	90
Wildwood	614	88
Perth Amboy	6,763	87
Orange	3,471	81
Lower Township Elementary	1,026	78
Lawrence Township (Cumberland)	277	76
Beverly City	194	75
Asbury Park	1,640	74
Roseville Community School	75	73
Camden's Pride Charter School	201	73
Environment Community Opportunity (ECO) Charter School	194	72
Newark	30,379	71
Hackensack City	2,912	71
Vineland Public Charter School	95	70
Passaic County Manchester Regional High School	551	67
Great Oaks Charter School	109	65
Atlantic City	5,693	64
Vineland	6,707	63
Fairfield Township	475	62
Dr Lena Edwards Academic Charter School	296	61
Total/Average	61,900	72

High-Poverty Districts Making Progress

Last year, ACNJ published a list of high-poverty districts with low school breakfast participation. Thirteen districts that were on that list are not on this year's list (See below). Three districts — West New York, Lady Liberty Academy Charter School and Harrison — significantly increased their breakfast participation and should be commended for stepping up to meet the school breakfast challenge.

Two districts — Garfield and Passaic City — recently launched or expanded classroom breakfast, so future data should show even more progress. The other eight districts posted small gains and should continue to work toward breakfast expansion.

Table 2:
High-Poverty Districts Making Progress

District	Percent Eligible Students Served, October 2010	Percent Eligible Students Served, March 2012	Percent Change
West New York	14	59	317
Lady Liberty Academy Charter School	24	45	85
Harrison Town	13	44	252
Roselle Borough	28	39	36
Ventnor City	28	38	38
Camden's Promise Charter School	24	38	58
Passaic City	20	36	78
Woodbury City	23	35	52
Garfield City	26	34	34
Woodlynne Borough	28	34	23
Freehold Borough	29	31	7
Englewood City	25	31	21
Neptune Township	29	31	4

School Breakfast Underachievers

Unfortunately, other districts have not made progress. In March 2012, 64 school districts with 50 percent or more eligible students served breakfast to less than 31 percent of these students.

In these districts alone, roughly 88,300 of New Jersey's needy children did not receive school breakfast. If all these eligible students received breakfast each school day, the districts would receive an estimated total of \$28.8 million more in federal funds each school year — and their students would have a healthy breakfast that can help them succeed in school.

Participation rates ranged from a low of 2 percent at the University Academy Charter High School to 30 percent in the

Englewood on the Palisades Charter School and the North Bergen School District.

This amplifies the need for districts with high child poverty to serve breakfast-after-the-bell to boost student participation. It is especially important for superintendents to provide leadership on this issue. School officials with effective programs say that superintendent support is essential to school breakfast success.

It should be noted that some districts on this list have launched a pilot program or are in the process of doing so, including Egg Harbor City, Greater Brunswick Charter School, Union City, Paterson and Burlington City.

Table 3:
School Breakfast Underachievers

County	High-Poverty, Low Participation Districts, March 2012	Number of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Breakfast	Percent Eligible Students as % of Total Enrollment	Percent of Eligible Students Served	Number Eligible Students NOT Served	Total Possible Federal Reimbursement*
Hudson	University Academy Charter High School	308	73	2	302	\$ 97,326
Essex	The Gray Charter School	251	89	5	239	77,643
Hudson	Guttenberg	751	81	6	709	231,399
Hudson	M.E.T.S. Charter School	206	64	10	186	60,372
Bergen	Lodi	1,820	55	11	1,626	520,776
Cape May	North Wildwood	168	52	11	150	49,086
Essex	Robert Treat Academy Charter School	400	73	11	357	113,319
Passaic	Haledon	729	70	11	647	207,729
Atlantic	Egg Harbor City	393	78	12	348	113,346
Monmouth	Hope Academy Charter School	180	90	12	159	51,813
Middlesex	Greater Brunswick Charter School	210	64	12	184	60,192
Bergen	Fairview	927	77	13	809	263,889
Essex	Pride Academy Charter School	199	83	14	172	55,764
Hudson	Bayonne	5,704	61	14	4,881	1,581,741
Middlesex	Carteret	2,329	64	15	1,984	639,072
Hudson	Liberty Academy Charter School	276	100	15	235	78,417
Camden	Brooklawn	173	51	15	147	47,655
Union	The Queen City Academy Charter School	182	77	15	154	49,824
Essex	Burch Charter School of Excellence	187	72	16	158	50,778
Hudson	Union City	9,859	91	16	8,270	2,712,978
Passaic	Prospect Park	538	61	16	450	147,204
Somerset	North Plainfield	1,824	58	17	1,523	489,875
Atlantic	PleasantTech Academy Charter School	486	100	17	405	134,865
Camden	D.U.E. Season Charter School	447	84	17	371	121,437
Hudson	Weehawken	638	52	17	529	172,269
Camden	Camden Academy Charter High School	351	84	18	289	93,753
Union	Rahway	2,212	58	18	1,821	584,820
Morris	Dover	2,150	72	18	1,767	571,343
Hudson	Hoboken	1,226	71	18	1,003	326,655
Hudson	Jersey City	21,221	78	18	17,341	5,658,183
Passaic	Passaic Arts and Science Charter School	288	81	18	235	75,933
Union	Linden City	3,036	52	19	2,471	789,282
Union	The Barack Obama Green Charter High	127	78	21	101	32,337
Hudson	Jersey City Golden Door Charter School	328	69	21	259	82,953
Bergen	Cliffside Park	1,562	56	22	1,218	393,440

*This represents the federal dollars districts would receive if every eligible child received a school breakfast all 180 days of the school year.

continued on following page

School Breakfast Underachievers *(continued from previous page)*

County	High-Poverty, Low Participation Districts, March 2012	Number of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Breakfast	Percent Eligible Students as % of Total Enrollment	Percent of Eligible Students Served	Number Eligible Students NOT Served	Total Possible Federal Reimbursement*
Somerset	Bound Brook	1,046	69	22	815	261,999
Monmouth	Bradley Beach	162	60	22	126	40,662
Union	Hillside	1,876	62	23	1,450	462,465
Salem	Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional	1,554	67	23	1,197	392,657
Burlington	Willingboro	2,390	56	23	1,835	592,371
Essex	University Heights Charter School	261	91	23	200	65,466
Essex	Marion P. Thomas Charter School	576	91	23	441	143,019
Burlington	Mount Holly	489	54	24	372	120,366
Union	Union County TEAMS Charter School	175	63	25	132	42,336
Morris	Wharton Borough	426	55	25	321	102,627
Essex	New Horizons Community Charter School	424	93	25	317	103,671
Essex	Greater Newark Charter School	126	75	25	94	29,898
Burlington	Burlington City	1,021	57	26	760	246,060
Hudson	Soaring Heights Charter School	130	59	26	96	29,592
Hudson	Jersey City Community Charter School	491	86	27	361	117,891
Passaic	Paterson	20,879	86	27	15,188	4,994,802
Camden	Lindenwold Board of Education	1,685	74	27	1,224	395,496
Mercer	Paul Robeson Charter School for the Humanities	241	88	27	175	56,925
Union	Plainfield	4,857	77	28	3,517	1,149,696
Mercer	Emily Fisher Charter School	372	95	28	269	87,845
Essex	Irvington	4,463	63	28	3,198	1,048,086
Atlantic	Somers Point	634	58	29	452	145,224
Essex	Newark Educators Community Charter School	254	92	29	181	58,599
Essex	Visions Academy Charter High School	217	81	30	153	49,491
Atlantic	Oceanside Charter School	311	96	30	218	71,352
Essex	Discovery Charter School	70	92	30	49	16,155
Union	Central Jersey Arts Charter School	295	80	28	212	69,192
Bergen	Englewood on the Palisades Charter School	93	48	30	65	20,943
Hudson	North Bergen	4,872	62	30	3,404	1,107,882
	Total/Average	112,074	76	20	88,320	\$28,760,234

*This represents the federal dollars districts would receive if every eligible child received a school breakfast all 180 days of the school year.

“Most of the challenges are myths and it’s all about getting beyond those myths and getting to reality.”

—Edison Superintendent Richard O’Malley.

Serving up School Breakfast: A Recipe for Success

New Jersey school officials who have built successful school breakfast programs provide a recipe for success. Many of these school officials say they faced some opposition when they first proposed breakfast after the bell. Clean-up, cost and lost instructional time were the most common concerns raised, they said.

With a combination of good communication, collaboration and creative problem-solving, districts were able to easily meet these challenges, school officials said.

“Most of the challenges are myths and it’s all about getting beyond those myths and getting to reality,” said Edison Superintendent Richard O’Malley, who began rolling out breakfast after the bell last year in response to ACNJ’s first annual school breakfast report.

“Leadership is key,” added O’Malley, who expects to have all schools on board by the end of the year. “I brought together my cabinet of principals and supervisors and walked through the logistics and the benefits. Then we started school-by-school.”

“The most daunting task is getting everybody to buy into it,” said Director of Dining Service Adam Sawchak, who designed North Brunswick’s school breakfast program nine years ago and still oversees it. “There’s always going to be some pushback at first, but once the program starts, people realize serving breakfast in the classroom is not a hassle and it becomes part of the routine.”

Keeping it Clean

School officials are often understandably concerned about keeping their classrooms clean and worry that crumbs, spills and garbage can become an issue. Many districts, however, have forged simple solutions to the clean-up challenge.

A common practice is to tuck garbage bags inside the containers used to deliver the meals to the classroom. Some districts also enlist students’ help in both delivering breakfast and cleaning up.



Vineland students grab a breakfast and head to class each morning.

In North Brunswick, for example, garbage bags are dropped off at the classrooms each morning. When children are finished eating, the waste is put in the bags, which are then left in the hallway for the custodial staff to pick up.

North Brunswick also serves breakfast foods that create little mess. For example, one staple of North Brunswick’s breakfast menu are pancakes with maple syrup baked inside, eliminating the potential for messy pours and sticky hands and desks. Cereal bars are another non-messy item that is often served.

“It’s trying to find that right mix,” said Sawchak. “In the end, you want to keep it simple. It’s breakfast, not brain surgery.”

In Newark, student volunteers help deliver breakfast to their classrooms. A garbage bag is packed into each of the large rubber containers that hold the morning meals. At the end of breakfast, one or two student volunteers hold open the bags so their classmates can throw away their garbage. The students place the bags outside the classroom door for custodians to pick up.

Principal Kathy Duke-Jackson of Newark’s First Avenue School says having the children help with breakfast keeps things neat and organized — and gives children a valuable lesson in responsibility and leadership.

“I think every school has the opportunity to incorporate this leadership piece into their breakfast programs,” Duke-Jackson said. “It’s not just breakfast, it’s about responsibility.”

After dealing with some spills when the Harrison School District first launched classroom breakfast last year, first grade teacher Donna Thompson realized it would be easier to have two student helpers walk around to each desk with a garbage bag so their classmates could easily dispose of garbage. A third student follows with a towel to quickly clean up any messes, Thompson added.



A Burlington Township student enjoys breakfast before starting her school work.

“I have to admit in the beginning it was a little rough,” said Thompson, who teaches at Lincoln Elementary School. “It’s a live and learn situation. But as time went on, it was great and the students adjusted.”

Thompson quickly noticed that her students were more alert after eating and less likely to ask to go to the nurse before lunch. The benefits far outweighed any challenges, she added.

“You have to open your mind and know it’s going to be helpful to the child,” Thompson said. “If the children are tired and hungry, they are not going to work anyway.”

In Vineland, garbage cans on wheels are rolled into hallways every morning throughout Gloria M. Sabater Elementary School. When students are finished eating, they quietly throw away the garbage in the hallway and then return to their desks. Custodians make the rounds and wheel away the cans after breakfast is over. To further reduce waste, Vineland also donates any unopened, non-perishable food to a local food bank.

“Knowing local community food banks are feeding people every day, we decided to reach out to them so our unused food can be used by someone in need,” said Vice Principal Ed Benish. “The local food bank comes here twice a week to pick up items that would have been thrown away.”

In West New York, Food Services Director Sal Valenza got creative last year when he introduced a classroom breakfast pilot program at an elementary school. The principal was worried about overburdening the custodial staff with cleaning up classroom breakfast, so Valenza recruited his food services staff to retrieve the garbage after breakfast was over.

By removing this hurdle, Valenza was able to demonstrate the benefits of classroom breakfast. As a result, the principal of

the pilot elementary school — along with five others — became champions of breakfast after the bell.

“I’m not going to say there weren’t bumps in the road, but people saw the value of the program and it has worked out really well,” Valenza said, adding that six elementary schools in West New York now serve breakfast in the classroom. “It was supposed to be a pilot program, but soon other principals were asking me, ‘When’s my turn? We want this now.’”

Breakfast Maximizes Instruction Time

While school officials worry about losing valuable instruction time, some schools use breakfast time — which takes about 15 minutes — to start the day’s lessons. Others tend to housekeeping tasks, such as taking attendance, tallying lunch orders and having students listen to the morning announcements, while they eat. Teachers also say students are more focused after eating, so instruction time becomes more productive.

Importantly, in January 2012, the state Departments of Education and Agriculture issued a joint memorandum that encourages districts to implement breakfast after the bell. In that memo, Education Commissioner Christopher Cerf said that breakfast time can be counted as instructional time.

“We’ve made meal time part of our instruction time,” said Edison Superintendent O’Malley. “It’s OK to have milk while you’re doing math. It’s almost like having a pencil on your desk.”

In West New York, some teachers read stories to their students during breakfast. In Harrison, teacher Thompson uses breakfast time to talk with her students about healthy eating habits, as part of the health instruction she must deliver to her 1st graders.

At Newark’s First Avenue School, 2nd grade teacher Chelsea Vargo directs children to write in their journals as they sip on juice boxes and eat spoonfuls of cereal. In Edison, 1st grade teacher Danielle Rispoli has her students start on worksheets or other tasks.

“They have it down to a science,” said Vargo. “There’s no time taken away from instruction and breakfast definitely helps keep them energized and focused throughout the day.”

Teachers, principals and superintendents all say that a good breakfast makes instruction time more productive, with less disruptions and students able to focus on their work. So those 10 to 15 minutes are time well-spent, they say.

Covering the Cost of Breakfast After the Bell

Other common concerns are cost, tracking which students eat breakfast and collecting payment from students who are not eligible for a free meal.

In districts with a large number of children eligible for free- or reduced-priced meals, the most common approach is to provide breakfast free to all children. This method typically pays for itself. When more children eat school breakfast, the cost per-meal generally declines, as labor and equipment costs remain relatively stable. At the same time, the district realizes a substantial increase in federal school meal reimbursement dollars.

In fact, if New Jersey school districts served breakfast to just 60 percent of the students who receive free- or reduced-priced lunch, districts would collect an additional \$22.6 million in federal funding, according to the Food Research and Action Center.

In Harrison, where 77 percent of students are eligible for free- and reduced-priced school meals, Assistant School Business Administrator Michael Pichowicz said it was logistically easier to offer a universal program, eliminating the need for teachers to collect money or keep track of which students needed to pay.

“We look at breakfast as a vehicle for higher achievement so the less obstacles we have, the better,” Pichowicz said.

Districts with fewer low-income students generally charge non-eligible students a small fee, which is typically collected electronically, so teachers do not have to collect money in the morning. Like universal programs, this method makes it impossible for students to know which students are paying and which ones are not.

In Edison, which charges paying students \$1 for breakfast, the classroom breakfast has more than paid for itself, said Superintendent O’Malley, even though the district has a relatively low rate of eligible students at roughly 30 percent. In addition, collecting money from paying students has not been a problem, O’Malley added.

In Burlington Township, a breakfast log is packed each day inside the insulated coolers containing the meals. Teachers check off which students ate breakfast and then return the log to the cafeteria. Food services workers enter the log into a computer, including students who pay. Payment is then deducted from the student’s account, according to Business Administrator Mary Ann Bell, who helped design Burlington Township’s classroom breakfast program. Last year, Burlington Township charged paying students \$1.25 for breakfast.

A Moral Imperative

“The benefits so far outweigh the management of the logistics. We believe for learning to take place the basic needs of children have to be addressed and that includes nourishment. School breakfast is a moral imperative for us.”

—Christopher Manno,
Burlington Township Superintendent



A Burlington Township student grabs a breakfast from coolers stationed in the classroom.

Fresh Ways to Serve School Breakfast

Breakfast in the Classroom

Classroom breakfast dramatically increases school breakfast participation, often to nearly 100 percent of students. Typically, food services staff members pack meals into insulated containers for each classroom and deliver to the classrooms before the first bell rings. Some districts have student monitors who deliver breakfast to the classrooms. Students come into the classroom, grab their meal and sit down to eat. When

breakfast is over, students dispose of their trash for custodial staff to collect.

Grab-and-Go Breakfast

Breakfast carts are stationed at the entrance of the school or in other high traffic areas. Upon entering the building, children “grab” a nutritious breakfast and “go” to their first period class. This model is often used in middle and high schools.

Second Chance Breakfast

Often, teenagers are not hungry when they arrive at school. Sometime before lunch, though, their stomachs start to rumble. Serving breakfast after first period, commonly known as “Second Chance Breakfast,” allows students to eat when they are hungry. Students are offered meals, often Grab-and-Go style, either between classes or during a “nutrition break” that occurs later in the morning.

Everybody Eats Breakfast at Newark Public Schools

Before the bell rings at First Avenue School in Newark's North Ward, student "runners" file into the cafeteria to pick up bins labeled with their classroom's number.

Packed neatly inside each of the gray containers is the day's breakfast: pints of fat-free and low-fat milk, bowls of whole-grain cereal, small containers of juice and utensils. There's also a garbage bag to use for easy clean-up and a student roster to keep track of who has received a meal.

The students head back to their classrooms and like clockwork begin unpacking the bin's contents. By the time the school bell rings at 8:20 a.m., students have already taken out their journals to begin writing, as they quietly eat spoonfuls of cereal and sip on juice boxes.

This scene plays out each morning throughout Newark's public schools. In total, Newark successfully serves free breakfast to about 25,000 students a day at 67 elementary schools and 16 high schools, according to Tonya Riggins, director of food services.



Bins with student lists make serving breakfast after the bell easy.

Newark's school breakfast program has earned national recognition. According to the Food Research and Action Center, Newark was the top urban center in the nation for its high participation in school breakfast. In 2012, 87 percent of eligible students who ate lunch through the federal school meals program also ate breakfast at school.

Kids Are Focused

Principal Kathy Duke-Jackson said serving breakfast at school takes the guess work out of whether a child has had any thing to eat in the morning before coming to school. "You don't know if a child has eaten in the morning," she says. "Because of the school breakfast program students are focused and ready. By the middle part of the day they are no longer lethargic. Breakfast gives them an extra boost."

"Breakfast in the classroom is a concerted effort on the part of principals, teachers and custodians," Riggins adds. "It's a win-win for everyone."

Breakfast Boosts — Help is available!

New Jersey school districts may qualify for grants and other technical assistance through various organizations to more effectively serve school breakfast.

New Jersey Department of Agriculture can provide guidance on various issues. Contact Janet Hawk at (609) 984-0692 or janet.hawk@ag.state.nj.us.

The American Dairy Association and Council provides technical assistance and grants to Central and North Jersey school districts, www.adadc.com

The Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council provides technical assistance and grants to South Jersey school districts, www.dairyspot.com

Advocates for Children of New Jersey has compiled a list of school officials with successful breakfast programs who are willing to assist other neighboring districts with tackling the logistics of breakfast after the bell. Contact Reginald Dorsey at rdorsey@acnj.org.

For more information and resources, visit www.njschoolbreakfast.org.



North Brunswick food staff workers pack the morning meal.

Breakfast After the Bell Is Win-Win

As more New Jersey districts step up to provide breakfast after the bell, these districts serve as models for others that have not yet met the school breakfast challenge.

“Families of all backgrounds have been impacted by our economy and need some assistance,” said Burlington Township Superintendent Christopher Manno, “The breakfast program is just a logical, sensible way to address the needs of our community.

“The benefits so far outweigh the management of the logistics,” Manno added. “We believe for learning to take place the basic needs of children have to be addressed and that includes nourishment. School breakfast is a moral imperative for us.”

Recommendations

- **County Leadership.** County school superintendents and the new Regional Achievement Centers should use the data in this report to identify high-need, low-participation schools in their area and work with school administrators, school boards and food service coordinators to launch breakfast after the bell.
- **Local Leadership.** Superintendents and school boards in high-poverty, low-participation districts should instruct their food service coordinators to implement breakfast after the bell. As the top administrator and leader, superintendents’ support of breakfast after the bell is especially critical.
- **Fund School Breakfast.** New Jersey should reinstate supplemental funding of the School Breakfast Program to provide fiscal incentives to districts to adopt a “breakfast after the bell” approach to school breakfast.

How does your district rate?

Find county and district level participation data at www.acnj.org or email rdorsey@acnj.org



Giving Every Child A Chance

35 Halsey Street, 2nd Floor, Newark, NJ 07102 • (973) 643-3876 • Fax (973) 643-9153 • advocates@acnj.org •

www.acnj.org