

## FACT SHEET

# SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

### What is the School Breakfast Program?

The School Breakfast Program is a Federal program that assists public schools and non-profit private schools in providing affordable meals to children. The program offers free or reduced price meals to children who qualify based on family size and income. The program is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture and, in California, by the California Department of Education (CDE).

Studies show that children who eat school breakfast have better nutrition and academic performance than those who do not eat breakfast or who eat an unhealthy breakfast. Students who eat breakfast have a lower overall fat intake, snack less throughout the day, eat more fruits, drink more milk, and are less likely to be overweight than those who don't eat breakfast.

### What Are the Challenges Around the School Breakfast Program?

- ❖ Not all schools offer school breakfast.
- ❖ Foods in the school breakfast program may vary in quality and be limited in variety.
- ❖ The cost of school food service providing breakfast to students is higher than the meal reimbursement received for breakfast.
- ❖ There may be a stigma attached to the breakfast program; students who receive free and reduced price meals are singled out based on their payment status.
- ❖ Breakfast may not be served at times or in locations convenient for students.

### What is the Ideal Situation?

- ❖ All schools offer school breakfast.
- ❖ In schools serving a high percentage of low-income families, breakfast is provided free to all students (universal breakfast).
- ❖ Every school breakfast promotes health, serves quality food, and appeals to students.



### Additional Resources

*School Breakfast*, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

School breakfast program information and resources for stakeholders, schools, parents, and advocates.

[www.frac.org/html/federal\\_food\\_programs/programs/sbp.html](http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/sbp.html)

*School Breakfast Scorecard 2007*, FRAC

A report that assesses the status of school breakfast in the United States; includes strategies for starting/improving school breakfast and success stories.

[www.frac.org/pdf/SBP\\_2007.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/SBP_2007.pdf)



## SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM *continued*

- ❖ The school breakfast program is appropriately marketed to attract student participation.
- ❖ There is no difference between how the free and reduced price students receive their food and how those paying full price receive their food.
- ❖ Breakfast is offered in a variety of ways (e.g., cafeteria food carts, second-chance breakfast mid-morning, grab-and-go, in the classroom).
- ❖ Class schedules are adjusted to allow adequate time for eating the school breakfast.

### **What does your LSWP say about school breakfast?**

#### **What Can Parents Do?**

- ❖ Find out if your school participates in the school breakfast program and if so, ask the cafeteria manager if many students participate.
- ❖ Encourage school leaders (principals, assistant principals, cafeteria managers) to start a school breakfast program, if not currently offered.
- ❖ Ask your child what foods are served in the school breakfast program.
- ❖ Assess the foods being served at breakfast, the locations where they are served, and student interest in school breakfast.
- ❖ Work with the food service director to research alternative quick-serve options (e.g., breakfast on the bus, second-chance breakfast, grab-and-go, in the classroom) and find out if students are interested in these.
- ❖ Work with food service staff and school administration to ensure that students are not singled out in meal lines based on ability to pay.
- ❖ Talk with food service directors from other schools that have set up successful school breakfast programs.
- ❖ Take a team of parents and employees to visit another school that offers breakfast.
- ❖ Advocate for the elimination of the sale of all competitive foods during breakfast.

#### *Breakfast First: Healthy Food for Hungry Minds, California Food Policy Advocates*

A comprehensive school breakfast website that has tools and resources for building a strong school breakfast program.  
[www.breakfastfirst.org/nutrition.html](http://www.breakfastfirst.org/nutrition.html)

#### *School Breakfast, Fast and Healthy Food for Thought, Nutrition Explorations, National Dairy Council*

Background information on why school breakfast is important, nutrition education resources, and tips for creating successful school breakfast.  
[www.nutritionexplorations.org/parents/school-breakfast.asp](http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/parents/school-breakfast.asp)

#### *Feed More Kids for School Breakfast Success, CDE, Nutrition Services Division.*

Tips for creating a successful school breakfast program.  
[www.cde.ca.gov/lis/nul/he/documents/feedmorebrkfst.pdf](http://www.cde.ca.gov/lis/nul/he/documents/feedmorebrkfst.pdf)