



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Christopher D. Cerf, Acting Commissioner *CMC*
NJ Department of Education

Douglas H. Fisher, Secretary *dhf*
NJ Department of Agriculture

SUBJECT: School Breakfast Program

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture and New Jersey Department of Education support the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and have partnered to communicate its importance to every school district in the State. Together we strive for career and college readiness and overall wellness for all of New Jersey's students, and greater access to healthy breakfasts will help us get there.

Research consistently shows that hungry children do not effectively learn, yet participation data for New Jersey has shown that only 37% of economically disadvantaged students that regularly consume a school lunch also participate in a school breakfast program. Students who participate in the School Breakfast Program perform better academically and have better school attendance. Moreover, their overall dietary intake is greater than that of non-participating students.

One way to ensure that all students routinely eat breakfast is to think creatively about how to get more students participating in the program to which they are entitled. We encourage you to think about providing students with breakfast in the classroom if that is what it takes to increase their access to the program. That time could be considered part of instructional time and would only take about 10 minutes. Breakfast can be served and eaten during morning activities, such as announcements, attendance, homeroom, turning in homework, and individual or out-loud reading time so no instructional time is lost. Teachers that have participated in classroom breakfasts have reported that it is a successful transitional activity, and some have even reported that they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer nurse visits, and less tardiness and absenteeism.

The School Breakfast Program is an easy way to enhance children's health and improve their academic achievement. In most cases, the breakfast can be completely supported by the federal meal

reimbursements. A vibrant, well-utilized breakfast program results in a significant increase in meal reimbursement revenue. There are numerous ways to increase participation in the SBP such as:

- Adjust the school start time (and bus schedules) in ways that encourage more children to eat breakfast at school
- Classroom breakfast – breakfasts served to the students in the classroom
- Grab and Go – children receive breakfast from mobile carts as they arrive at school and eat prior to entering the classroom
- Breakfast to Go – students pick up a bagged breakfast from the cafeteria and bring it to the classroom
- Second Chance Breakfast – breakfast is offered some time after first period, during recess or a passing period

Thank you for your consideration of this important request and good luck with increasing participation in the School Breakfast Program. We look forward to hearing about your successes. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Division of Food & Nutrition is available to support you through breakfast implementation. You may contact Janet Hawk, Coordinator of School Nutrition Programs, at 609-984-0692. You may also contact your local county office of education for assistance.

CDC:CE/pmb.referral2012.sbp

c: Executive County Superintendents
Members, State Board of Education
NJ LEE Group
Garden State Coalition
Senator Loretta Weinberg