

Maryland Campaign to Increase School Breakfast Participation Case Study

The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger adopted a strategic approach to achieve its ambitious goals of increasing school breakfast participation. The Partnership employed a three pronged approach focusing on an aggressive targeted outreach campaign to schools, advocacy for increased state support of breakfast, and a statewide school breakfast contest. In 2012, this approach proved successful with the Partnership achieving its goals for increased school breakfast participation. This case study provides details on the formulation, execution, and results of these strategies.

ABOUT THE NO KID HUNGRY FOR BEST PRACTICES

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign is ending childhood hunger by connecting kids to the healthy food they need, every day; teaches families how to cook healthy, affordable meals through Cooking Matters®; and invests in community organizations that fight hunger.

The No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices provides the tools and resources needed to help elected officials and their staff, educators and community leaders achieve success in fighting childhood hunger. Learn what works in the fight against childhood hunger and discover toolkits, case studies, hunger stats, issue briefs, reports and more at BestPractices.NoKidHungry.org.

MARYLAND'S CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION

At the end of 2011, the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger (Partnership), led by Share Our Strength's Maryland No Kid Hungry office and the Governor's Office for Children, began to plan its 2012 strategy for increasing participation in school breakfast. The Partnership established a participation goal that by 2015, 70 percent of students who eat a free or reduced-price school lunch would also eat school breakfast. To stay on track for achieving this goal, the Partnership established interim annual goals and developed the strategies necessary to achieve these goals.

For 2012, the Partnership set a goal of increasing school breakfast participation by 10 percentage points to 56 percent. To achieve this, the Partnership developed a strategy with three components:

- 1) **Aggressive Outreach:** Maryland No Kid Hungry conducted an aggressive outreach campaign to convert a target list of 150 schools from serving a traditional model of school breakfast to an innovative breakfast model that operates during the school day.
- 2) **Advocacy:** The Partnership developed an advocacy campaign to expand the Maryland Meals for Achievement program, a successful state-funded classroom breakfast program.
- 3) **Statewide Breakfast Contest:** Finally, the Partnership supported the School Breakfast Contest, which was organized by the Maryland State Department of Education.

EXPAND THE FIRST CLASS BREAKFAST INITIATIVE

Experience from Maryland and across the country confirms that schools that make breakfast a part of the school day have significantly higher rates of school breakfast participation. Based on this fact, the Partnership decided that the primary strategy to increase school breakfast participation in 2012 would be through an expanded First Class Breakfast Initiative. The initiative is a project in Maryland to improve participation in school breakfast by working with schools to make breakfast a part of the school day.

To achieve its 2015 goal of achieving a school breakfast participation rate of 70 percent of low-income students who eat a free or reduced-price school lunch also eating school breakfast, the Partnership set intermediate annual goals (Figure 1). Using the latest available data from the state, Maryland No Kid Hungry calculated that achieving the 2012 participation goal of 56 percent would require approximately 24,000 more students eating breakfast per school day (Table 1). Maryland No Kid Hungry next needed to determine a target list of schools for adopting alternative breakfast models that would enable them to reach 24,000 breakfast eaters.

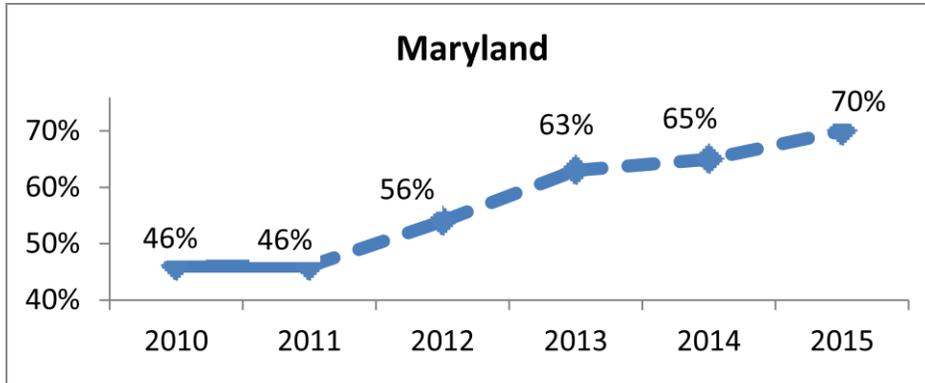


Figure 1. Maryland Annual School Breakfast Participation Goals

Table 1. Establishing Goals to Increase School Breakfast Participation in Maryland

2011 Participation Data		2012 Participation Data	
Average Daily Participation (ADP) of Free and Reduced-Price (FRP) Lunch	238,888	Estimated ADP of FRP Lunch ¹	239,880
ADP FRP Breakfast	110,333	ADP FRP Breakfast Needed to meet Goal	134,333
Participation Rate	46%	Participation Goal	56%

CREATING A TARGET LIST

To target efforts most effectively, Maryland No Kid Hungry decided to focus on the four jurisdictions in Maryland with the highest concentrations of low-income, food insecure children – Baltimore City and Prince George’s, Montgomery, and Baltimore Counties. They then analyzed school meals data for all schools in these four jurisdictions to identify those with the biggest gap between breakfast and lunch participation. Assuming that schools that shift from traditional to alternative breakfast delivery models would increase participation by 50 percent, Maryland No Kid Hungry projected that it would need to transition 150 schools to achieve its goal of increasing average daily school breakfast participation by 24,000 students.

BUILDING AN OUTREACH TEAM

With this target of 150 schools to transition from traditional to alternative breakfast models, Maryland No Kid Hungry needed to expand the scale of the First Class Breakfast Initiative, an initiative that began the previous year. Through the initiative, Maryland No Kid Hungry works with schools on implementing alternative breakfast delivery models by conducting outreach, providing technical assistance, and offering competitive grant funding to help with the associated start-up costs of implementing new breakfast models, such as coolers, carts, or point-of-sale systems.

To reach these 150 schools, Maryland No Kid Hungry hired five “Breakfast Coordinators” to conduct outreach and manage the grant making process in these four jurisdictions. With backgrounds in education, including former teachers, these Breakfast Coordinators are able to use their experience to help convince key decision-makers at schools on the importance of increasing school breakfast participation as well as aid in the logistics of starting an alternative breakfast model.

In addition to this outreach work conducted by the coordinators, the Partnership also worked at multiple other levels to build support for the breakfast work with local, regional and state-level decision makers, such as principals and teachers, school food service directors and superintendents, as well as the Governor and state education agency staff. The Partnership also worked to engage relevant associations, such as the Maryland State Education Association and the Maryland Retired School Professionals Association.

INCREASE ADVOCACY EFFORTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL BREAKFAST

The work to expand the *First Class Breakfast Initiative* also helped support the advocacy strategy to increase school breakfast participation through expanding the [Maryland Meals for Achievement \(MMFA\)](#) program. MMFA is an innovative, state-funded classroom breakfast program that provides schools with funding to enable them to serve all students free breakfast in the classroom, regardless of the child’s family income. The state funding reimburses schools for the costs associated with serving breakfast at no cost to children who would otherwise have to pay for a reduced-price or a full price breakfast.

The relationships the Partnership developed to help expand school breakfast at the state and local levels through the breakfast initiative also helped to build support in Annapolis around increased state funding for MMFA, which does not have enough funding to allow all eligible schools to

participate. While over 800 schools are eligible, only about 228 schools were approved to participate in MMFA for the 2011-2012 school year. The Partnership determined that a 20 percent increase in MMFA funding would allow over 40 additional schools to participate in the program.

In late 2011 and early 2012, the Partnership launched a successful awareness and advocacy campaign to protect and expand MMFA funding, including strategic communications plan to supporters in Maryland. This effort led to the approval of the 20 percent budget increase that advocates sought. Building on this success, in the second half of 2012, Maryland No Kid Hungry and its partners planned a multi-year effort to fully fund MMFA. The Partnership developed and implemented an advocacy strategy in late 2012 and early 2013 that led to the Governor including, and the Legislature approving, an increase in funding for MMFA.

LAUNCH STATEWIDE SCHOOL BREAKFAST CONTEST

With help from the Partnership, the Maryland State Department of Education organized a statewide 2012 School Breakfast Contest based on the success of Colorado's and several other states' experience with this strategy. The goal was to spread awareness about the importance of school breakfast and spur schools to increase breakfast participation. The contest incentivized schools to increase school breakfast participation through cash, prizes, and recognition. While 262 schools entered the contest, the ten schools with the largest increases in average daily school breakfast participation won prizes while the top three received cash prizes, provided by Share Our Strength.

The School Breakfast Contest has proven to be an effective strategy for publicizing the importance of school breakfast and spreading awareness of the need to increase participation. It particularly works well in conjunction with the more targeted strategy of the First Class Breakfast Initiative, described above, as it can achieve statewide impact with a relatively small investment. Meanwhile, outreach staff work at a more targeted, local level.

RESULTS: MARYLAND SURPASSES SCHOOL BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION GOAL

Maryland's school breakfast strategy was a success. By late 2012, state data indicated that school breakfast participation had surpassed the yearly goal. In addition, Breakfast Coordinators successfully worked with over 130 schools to obtain commitments to implement alternative breakfast models. Advocacy efforts in early 2012 resulted in an increase in funding for MMFA of \$560,000 for the FY 2013 budget, which enabled the state to serve over 40 more schools with 20,000 additional students. The MMFA advocacy that began in late 2012 called for an additional \$1.8 million in funding for FY 2014. In January 2013, the Governor included this additional \$1.8 million request for MMFA. Many legislators and other supporters in the state signed on to support this funding level that could provide school breakfast to up to 57,000 additional students. On April 5th, the Maryland General Assembly passed the final budget including Governor O'Malley's requested \$1.8 million increase for MMFA.

This success in Maryland was the result of many factors, including committed partners and dedicated leadership at the local and state levels. The strong planning and strategic vision that laid out specific activities to achieve clearly stated goals enabled the Partnership to implement its well-defined plan.