



## **WHY OFFER SCHOOL BREAKFAST FREE TO ALL CHILDREN?**

Offering breakfast at no charge to all students, often called “universal”, helps remove the stigma for low-income children of participation in school breakfast and is proven to increase participation.

### **Many children do not eat a nutritious breakfast every morning.**

- Many families are living on very tight budgets and can't afford to provide good breakfasts at home every day nor the money to buy them at school.
- Regardless of income, families today live busy lives, with long commutes and long and nontraditional work hours that often make it difficult to sit down long enough in the morning to eat a nutritious breakfast.

### **Schools that offer breakfast free to all children increase student participation rates.**

- Many students who are eligible for free or reduced price school breakfast do not participate because they do not wish to identify themselves as low-income by eating school breakfast. Offering breakfast at no charge to all students helps remove the stigma for low-income children of participation in school breakfast.
- Only 47 children eat federally-funded free or reduced price school breakfasts for every 100 who receive free or reduced price school lunch. Studies show that offering breakfast at no charge to all dramatically increases student participation in school breakfast.
- Some schools offer breakfast free to all children in the classroom as school starts in the morning, rather than in the cafeteria before school starts, which makes it easier for children to participate.

### **Programs that offer breakfast free to all children improve student achievement, diets and behavior.**

- Studies conclude that students who eat school breakfast at the start of the school day show a general increase in math and reading scores as well as improvements in their speed and memory in cognitive tests.
- Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- Children who have school breakfast eat more fruit, drink more milk, and consume a wider variety of foods than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.
- Schools that offer breakfast free to all students in the classroom report decreases in discipline and behavior problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments.



## HOW CAN SCHOOLS AFFORD TO OFFER FREE BREAKFAST TO ALL?

- Provision 2 is a federal School Breakfast Program (and National School Lunch Program) option for schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs when they serve meals to all students at no charge. Schools should contact their State Agencies for assistance on implementing Universal School Breakfast through Provision 2.
- Many school districts that serve a large percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced school meals find that they can break even when they offer breakfast at no charge to all, even without adopting the Provision 2 option. The increased participation brings in a sufficient amount of revenue to cover the additional costs.
- State legislation provides special state funding for universal school breakfast programs in nine states. Illinois provides funding for a universal breakfast pilot program for schools with 80 percent or more free and reduced-price eligible students. Maryland allocates \$3.1 million for “Maryland Meals for Achievement”, an in-classroom universal free school breakfast program. Massachusetts provides \$2 million annually to support universal breakfast, allocated for a reimbursement of \$0.24 per breakfast for any school offering universal breakfast if costs exceed other reimbursements. North Carolina allocates \$2.1 million annually to provide free universal school breakfast to kindergarten students in districts where 50% or more of the kindergarten students are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.
- States also provide funding to support the School Breakfast Program in general, which can provide larger benefits to schools that have larger participation rates. Some states provide additional funding for each breakfast served (California, Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin); some provide funding for breakfast start-up costs (California, Illinois, and Washington); and some provide additional incentive funds for increased participation (Pennsylvania and Virginia.)

### What Teachers and Students Say About Universal Breakfast

*Having breakfast at school every day helps me because I won't have to be hungry during language arts. – Maryland student*

*It is little to spend on long term results... It gives me time to visit with [my students]... It is a nice way to start the day nutritionally, socially, and emotionally. – Minnesota teacher*