

School Breakfast Participation at a Glance

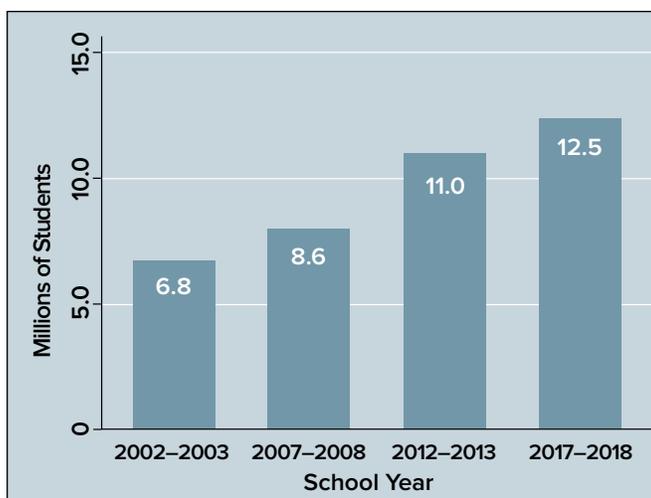
(School Year 2017–2018)

The Food Research & Action Center’s (FRAC) annual [School Breakfast Scorecard](#) ranks national and state participation in the School Breakfast Program, which provides millions of children a healthy morning meal each school day. School breakfast is a critical support for struggling families trying to stretch limited resources, and the program provides children a significant portion of the nutrition they need to learn and be healthy. Efforts to increase breakfast participation pay off — school breakfast leads to improved dietary intake, reduced food insecurity, better test scores, improved student health, and fewer distractions in the classroom. Success can be seen in schools and school districts of all sizes — large, small, urban, suburban, and rural.

Key Findings

- On an average school day, almost 14.6 million children participated in the School Breakfast Program in school year 2017–2018.
- Nearly 12.5 million were low-income children who received a free or reduced-price school breakfast.
- School breakfast participation among low-income children increased by nearly 149,000 students, or 1.2 percent over

Average Daily Free and Reduced-Price Participation in the School Breakfast Program



Top 10 States: Ratio of Free and Reduced-Price School Breakfast to Lunch Participation, School Year 2017–2018

State	Ratio of Free and Reduced-Price Students in School Breakfast per 100 in School Lunch
West Virginia	83.7
New Mexico	70.1
Vermont	69.5
District of Columbia	67.7
Kentucky	66.0
Arkansas	65.7
Tennessee	64.6
Delaware	62.8
South Carolina	62.8
Texas	62.7

the previous school year; however, the rate of growth has slowed during the last two school years compared to the rate of growth each year from the 2012–2013 school year to the 2015–2016 school year.

- For every 100 low-income children who participated in school lunch, 57 low-income children participated in school breakfast.
- If all states met FRAC’s goal of serving breakfast to 70 low-income students for every 100 who ate school lunch, close to 2.8 million additional children would have started the day with a healthy school breakfast, and states and school districts would have tapped into an additional \$804.7 million in federal funding to support school food services and local economies.
- For the fifth year in a row, West Virginia was the top-performing state; New Mexico was the only other state to meet FRAC’s goal. See how your state ranks in the table or in the [full report](#).

The ratio of low-income children participating in school breakfast to low-income children participating in school lunch increased slightly, to 57 per 100 in school year 2017–2018, up from 56.7 per 100 in the previous school year.

Best Practices

- Schools can offer free breakfast to all students (e.g., through [community eligibility](#)) and serve breakfast after the bell to overcome participation barriers, such as timing, cost, and stigma. Schools experience the greatest increases when the two approaches are combined.



- States can pass school breakfast legislation as a vehicle for change. A number of states have passed legislation, including Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. In the past year alone, New Jersey, New York, and Washington have enacted state laws.
- Anti-hunger advocates can build and strengthen broad coalitions to work on school breakfast expansion; support school leaders to implement breakfast after the bell programs; and encourage proper and meaningful engagement and training for all school staff when a breakfast after the bell program is implemented.

The *School Breakfast Scorecard* measures the School Breakfast Program's reach on national and state levels, analyzes these findings, and recommends actions for schools and districts to increase and expand the School Breakfast Program. Refer to the [full report](#) for further details.

Find more school breakfast resources and sign up to receive FRAC's monthly *Meals Matter: School Breakfast Newsletter* at frac.org.