



# CHILD NUTRITION FACT SHEET

Food Research & Action Center

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## School Breakfast Program

### WHY THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT

- Many children do not eat a nutritious breakfast at home in the morning.
- Often families are living on very tight budgets and can't afford to provide good breakfasts at home every day or the money to buy them at school. Regardless of income, families today live busy lives that often make it difficult to sit down long enough in the morning to eat a nutritious breakfast.
- Many children are not ready to eat breakfast when they first wake up. Other children may have long commutes to school or long periods between breakfast at home and school lunch, making breakfast at school an important option.

### ELIGIBILITY

- Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the School Breakfast Program.
- Household income determines if a child is eligible to receive free or reduced price meals, or must pay most of the cost. To receive free breakfast, household income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level; for reduced price, income must be between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level.
- For the 2009-2010 school year, 130 percent of the poverty level was \$23,803 per year for a family of three; 185 percent for a family of three is \$33,874 per year.

### PARTICIPATION

- The School Breakfast Program is open to all children enrolled in a participating school. More than three out of four schools that serve lunch also serve breakfast.
- On a typical day during the 2009-2010 school year, 11.3 million children in 86,816 schools and institutions participated in the School Breakfast Program. Of these children, 9.4 million, or 83.2 percent, received free or reduced price breakfasts.
- In the 2009-2010 school year, 47.2 children received free or reduced price school breakfast for every 100 who received free-or reduced price school lunch.
- Research shows that programs offering breakfast to all children during the first part of the school day at no cost, regardless of income, dramatically increase student participation in school breakfast.

# School Breakfast Program

## NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

- Reimbursable meals must meet federal nutrition standards. Breakfasts served as part of the School Breakfast Program provide one fourth or more of the daily recommended levels for key nutrients that children need.
- No more than 30 percent of calories in the breakfast can come from fat and less than 10 percent of calories can come from saturated fat.
- Research shows that children who have school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk, and consume a wider variety of foods than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.

## EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- Studies conclude that students who eat school breakfast increase their math and reading scores as well as improve their speed and memory in cognitive tests.
- Research shows that 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.

## REIMBURSEMENT AND FUNDING

- The United States Department of Agriculture, through its Food and Nutrition Service, administers the School Breakfast Program at the federal level. At the state level the program typically is administered by state education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with school food authorities.
- The School Breakfast Program provides per meal cash reimbursements from the federal government to public and non-profit private schools and residential childcare institutions.
- For the 2009-2010 school year, schools were reimbursed by the federal government \$1.46 per free breakfast served, \$1.16 per reduced priced breakfast, and \$0.26 per "paid" breakfast. Free students must not be charged any amount and reduced price students must not be charged more than 30 cents for breakfast.
- Schools where at least 40 percent of the lunches served are free or reduced price may qualify for extra "severe need" reimbursements of \$0.28 per free or reduced price breakfast served.
- The federal expenditures for fiscal year 2010 for the School Breakfast Program were \$2.55 billion. (This figure does not include the U.S. territories.)