

California Department of Education (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr10jtltr0701.asp>)
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Breakfast in the Classroom

Joint Letter with the California Department of Education and the California State Controller's Office regarding the importance of a strong School Breakfast Program (SBP).

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July 1, 2010

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES AND BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

We are writing both to underscore the importance of a strong School Breakfast Program (SBP) as part of our combined effort to increase academic achievement among California students and to dispel the myth that breakfast served in the classroom somehow detracts from instructional minutes.

Please be assured that you can provide students breakfast in the classroom while appropriate educational activities are taking place without worrying about an instructional minute audit exception. For example, in an elementary classroom setting, a teacher may read aloud to the class or have students read materials relevant to the day's lesson while they eat breakfast. In middle or high school classroom setting, a teacher may present educational materials relevant to the class or ask the students to read the materials while they eat breakfast. As long as the breakfast is served and eaten in the classroom while otherwise allowable instructional activities are underway, the time will not be considered free time by auditors.

Our number one educational priority in California is to ensure that children perform well in school and learn the skills necessary to become successful in life. The gap in achievement that exists between students in different socioeconomic groups cannot be ignored. Closing this gap and ensuring that all students are equally prepared academically is the top priority for the California Department of Education (CDE).

School Breakfast and Academic Achievement/Program Improvement

Research consistently shows that hungry students cannot learn. Specifically, students who routinely eat a nourishing breakfast perform better in school and have lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness. After a comprehensive literature review of 22 different studies, WestEd gave an "A-" to the national evidence linking school breakfast and academic achievement¹. One such study in Philadelphia and Maryland found that students who ate school breakfast at least four days per week averaged almost a whole letter math grade higher than students who rarely ate school breakfast².

School Breakfast Implementation and Participation

The SBP is an easy way to enhance children's health and improve their academic achievement. In most cases, the breakfast can be completely supported by federal and state meal reimbursements. Please note that local educational agencies (LEA) with vibrant, well-utilized breakfast programs have realized a significant increase in meal reimbursement revenue.

But the SBP is sadly underutilized in California. While over 9,800 public school sites participate in the National School Lunch Program, about 16 percent of these schools do not offer a SBP. Moreover, of the 3.1 million public school students who are eligible for a free and reduced-price breakfast, only about 908,000 (29 percent) of these students are participating in the SBP.

How to Increase Participation in School Breakfast

There are numerous ways to increase participation in the SBP. For instance, you may adjust the school start time (and bus schedules) in ways that encourage more children to eat breakfast at the school.

Here are some other examples:

- "Universal Classroom Breakfast," where all children eat breakfast in the classroom (which has been shown to increase attendance and decrease tardiness and trips to the school nurse). A significant number of California schools have

implemented universal classroom breakfast.

- "Grab-and-Go," where children receive breakfast from mobile carts as they arrive at school (via school buses or other means) and eat prior to entering the classroom.
- "Breakfast to Go," where students pick up a bagged breakfast from the cafeteria and bring it to the classroom. When used in St. Paul, Minnesota, the 12 participating schools saw the number of students eating breakfast increase from 39 to 63 percent. The district reported that the program has built community in the classrooms, provided a more relaxed start to the day, reduced tardiness rates by eight percent, and reduced office referrals for discipline problems by 20 percent.
- "Second Chance Breakfast," where breakfast is offered some time after first period, most often during recess or a passing period.

You can find more information about the SBP and how you can maximize the use of state and Title 1 funding to expand meal program access and reduce the stigma that may exist around meal program participation in my January 7, 2010, letter to County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators. You can find the letter on the CDE Year 2010 Letters Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr10ltr.asp>. In the January section select the "Improving Student Nutrition and Academic Achievement Through the School Breakfast Program" January 7, 2010: Letter to County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators regarding the School Breakfast Program (SBP) link.

BreakfastFirst Campaign

We support the BreakfastFirst Campaign, which the California Food Policy Advocates has organized to promote School Breakfast outside of the cafeteria (through classroom breakfast or other approaches), since serving breakfast outside of the cafeteria dramatically increases the number of children eating breakfast, and therefore the number of students starting the day ready to learn. We are pleased that the California School Boards Association, the Association of California School Administrators, the Parent Teacher Association, the California Teachers Association, the School Nurses Association, the California School Nutrition Association and other groups are co-sponsoring this campaign.

Hungry children cannot learn. Please make it a priority to expand your SBP (especially outside of the cafeteria) so that California students are nourished and ready to learn.

You can find information about the BreakfastFirst Campaign on the BreakfastFirst Web site at <http://breakfastfirst.org/> (Outside Source).

If you would like more information about the SSP, including how to plan the right approach for your school and various ways of increasing breakfast participation, please contact your Field Services Unit Child Nutrition Consultant by phone at 916-445-0850 or 800-952-5609.

Sincerely,

JACK O'CONNELL
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education

JOHN CHIANG
California State Controller
California State Controller's Office

JO/JC:pbp

¹ Rampersaud, G., Pereira, M., Girard, B., Adams, J., and Metz, J. (2005). Breakfast Habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 105(5), 743-760.

² Murphy, J.M., Pagano, M.E., Nachmani, J., Sperling, P., Kane, S., and Kleinman, M.D. (1998). The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 152(9), 899-907. Available at <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/152/9/899> (Outside Source).

Questions: Name | email@cde.ca.gov | XXX-XXX-XXXX

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