



Expanding Breakfast: A Proven Way to Improve Student Learning, Academic Achievement and Health

With all the programs now in place, from No Child Left Behind to local school wellness policies — complete with benchmarks for measurement and compliance — there has never been a more important time to help children perform at their maximum potential. Expanding Breakfast participation at school may very well be one of the most important, strategic tools for helping children improve their health, academic performance, behavior and more, to reach their maximum potential.

Participation in traditional, cafeteria-based breakfast programs is typically low, but when breakfast is expanded outside the cafeteria and served as Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab 'n' Go Breakfast, or Breakfast After 1st Period, breakfast participation soars.

These studies show the dramatic improvements children experience when they eat breakfast:

Research Studies Supporting the Positive Impact of Breakfast on Children

More Frequent Breakfast Consumption Protects Adolescent from Overweight

Researchers studied more than 2,500 adolescents from ethnically and socio-economically diverse backgrounds to determine factors which affected their risk for overweight. Participants were surveyed at the beginning of the study and again five years later. Results showed that body dissatisfaction, weight concerns, unhealthy weight control behaviors, weight-related stigmatization, and parents' concern about children's weight may increase risk for overweight. Frequent breakfast consumption was protective of overweight. The authors recommend developing programs and strategies that increase body satisfaction and that support healthy, more effective weight-control behaviors, such as eating breakfast regularly.

Go to <http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/v15/n11/abs/oby2007327a.html> for the study abstract.

Haines J, et al. Obesity, 15(11): 2748-2760, 2007.

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) Breakfast Pilot Program

Classroom Breakfast Scores High in Maryland

(<http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/MarylandMeals.pdf>) is one of the most comprehensive evaluations of a breakfast program. Studied by Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, the report includes findings from Year III of the program. Breakfast in the Classroom was served at no charge.

- Composite Index scores on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) improved significantly more in the MMFA schools than in a matched group of comparison schools)
- Tardiness decreased by 8%
- Suspensions decreased by 36%
- 91% of the staff said the program should continue in their school

For more details go to <http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/MarylandMeals.pdf>.

Minnesota's Fast Break to Learning Breakfast Program

Fast Break to Learning (<http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/MinnesotaFastBreak.pdf>) is a report of the First-Year Results of the Fast Break to Learning School Breakfast Program by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, where breakfast was offered to all students, at little or no charge and often served after the school day started, either in the classroom or the cafeteria. Excellent results were reported.

- On 3 out of 4 reading and math tests on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test (MCAT) 3rd and 5th graders in Fast Break to Learning schools improved academic achievement more than the control group of schools
- 97% of principals strongly agreed or agreed their school benefited from the program, with decreased negative behavior and tardiness as the top benefits mentioned

For more details go to <http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/MinnesotaFastBreak.pdf>.

FRAC's Compilation of Research Linking Breakfast and Academic Performance

The Child Nutrition Fact Sheet: Breakfast for Learning

(<http://www.frac.org/pdf/breakfastforlearning.PDF>) developed by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), is an excellent, easy to read document that summarizes key findings of many studies done on the connection between students eating breakfast and their academic performance. Also included are findings on how breakfast can reduce the obesity risk.

Milwaukee Public Schools and Hunger Task Force Findings

In a unique coalition between the [Milwaukee Public Schools and the Hunger Task Force](http://www.gotbreakfast.org/media/HFCR_revised.pdf) (http://www.gotbreakfast.org/media/HFCR_revised.pdf), pilots that are still ongoing have been conducted over the past several years. Testing centered on providing Universal Free Breakfast with Breakfast in the Classroom. By November 2006 school breakfast participation in these

schools increased 240% with staff reporting many positive academic and behavioral results.

For more details go to http://www.gotbreakfast.org/media/HFCR_revised.pdf.

New York Academics & Breakfast Connection Pilot

In the [New York Academics & Breakfast Connection \(ABC\) Pilot](#)

(<http://www.hungernys.org/programs/documents/ABCfinal.pdf>), breakfast was offered free of charge to all students in the classroom.

- Breakfast program participation doubled from 23% to 58%
- Tardiness reduced from 3.0 to 2.6 days per student per year
- 100% of the principals and nearly 80% of teachers believed the pilot made an important contribution to the education process.
- 79% of the teachers supported the continuation of the Pilot

For more details go to <http://www.hungernys.org/programs/documents/ABCfinal.pdf>.