



DISTRICT: Lake Elmo Elementary School, Stillwater, Minn.
PRINCIPAL: Barbara Lyman
ALTERNATE BREAKFAST SERVICE: Grab 'n' Go Breakfast Combination

★ **BACKGROUND**

Prior to 2002, Lake Elmo Elementary, (enrollment of 700) had no breakfast program at all. Principal Barbara Lyman took a step back and compared the importance of having a breakfast program in 2002 to the importance of having a lunch program in 1990. "It isn't a socio-economic issue," explains Lyman. "In 2002 parents' lives are busy and kids' lives are even busier! We see the school as a service organization to children and parents; they are our clients and we provide an exceptional academic, developmental, and nurturing environment for the kids. Logically, school breakfast needs to be a part of that."

Lake Elmo is located in an affluent area with only a 15 percent free/reduced rate, yet it was apparent, just from the number of morning visits to the nurse, that many children weren't eating breakfast. Acknowledging that children like to sleep as late as possible and aren't hungry when they first wake up, Lyman was determined to rectify this situation.

★ **IMPLEMENTATION**

Working with Lake Elmo's coordinator of foodservice purchasing, Linda Burnham, a flexible Expanding Breakfast program was created. In an effort to generate the most teacher support, emphasis is placed on asking teachers to allow and encourage children to eat breakfast. They are given a choice between children getting a Grab 'n' Go breakfast from the cafeteria on their way into school and taking it to the classroom or having children eat in the cafeteria.

For those using the Grab 'n' Go option, a patrol hands the children bags and they go through the line, choosing the items they want. Each day there is cereal, milk, juice and fruit, as well as a warm item, like ham, egg and cheese biscuits or waffle sticks.

★ **IMPACT**

The first day of the program they anticipated serving 25 breakfasts and 85 children ate. Now about 170 breakfasts are served each day, 25 percent of the enrollment. The number of trips to the nurse have decreased dramatically and rather than losing instructional time from serving breakfast, teachers agree they have gained it, since students are in the classroom and there are fewer interruptions. Teacher support is phenomenal.

"There's the philosophical concern the school is doing the parent's job," says Lyman. "It may be true, but the status of children's nutrition doesn't care who does the job. It's always a choice for children to eat at home, we just make it available in case they don't."

★ **WORDS OF ADVICE**

"The last thing any of us need is more work," notes Lyman. "But you need to look at the value that is added to each child's day by offering expanded breakfast." Quoting one of her students, Lyman adds, "'Learning is hard work!' You'll find it really isn't very difficult to support your students with breakfast."