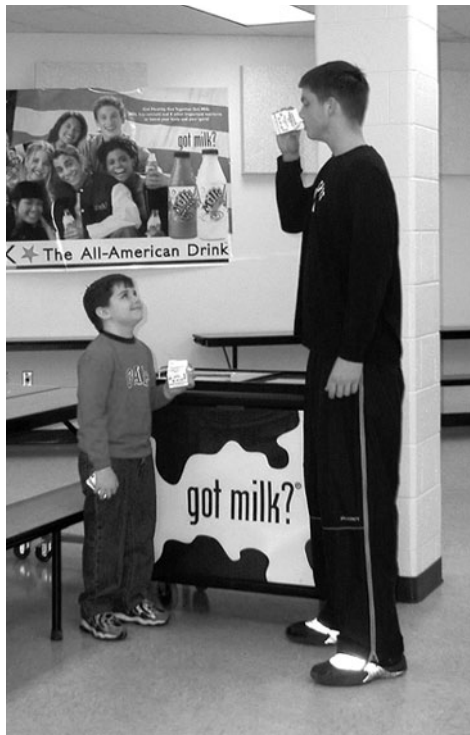


EXPANDING BREAKFAST REACHES NEW HEIGHTS IN RURAL AND URBAN DISTRICTS



Students in rural Mahanoy Area School District have come to realize the importance of eating breakfast. And while nutrition education may have played a role in this discovery, the biggest influence has been the role models they look up to, literally.

High school basketball players, including a six-foot-seven star, have joined the middle school breakfast team to pass out bag breakfasts in the cafeteria. As students take their meals to their classrooms, players offer positive messages like “Eat your entire breakfast and drink your milk.” Joyce Ciarla, school food service director for this district of 1,200 students in rural Schuylkill County, Pa. said, “I think it is so important for the children to have role models to look up to.”



Ahh, the power of milk in Mahanoy District.

Students are not the only ones who have contributed to the success of the breakfast program. “I attribute the success of the program to the motivation of everyone from the administration to the cafeteria staff,” Ciarla said.

Ciarla said the district piloted Classroom Breakfast in the middle school and Breakfast After 1st Period in the high school in the spring of 2002 through expanding breakfast grants offered by Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association.

In addition, district-wide support has been very strong, making it possible for these pilot programs to become permanent programs. From the beginning, the administration recognized the integral role the school feeding program plays in total student development, especially in a district serving 57 percent free and reduced meals. The middle school principal, also realizing the importance of school breakfast for students, decided to extend homeroom by 15 minutes to allow enough time for the classroom meal. This support led to opening a second cafeteria serving line and a 40 percent increase in breakfast participation. “The kids love it,” Ciarla said. The school’s principal also joined in the fun, initiating “Breakfast with the Principal.” This program allows him to rotate between the 21 homerooms to share breakfast and visit with the students on Fridays.

High school students are also very positive about alternative breakfast. A student nutrition advisory council has requested to bring back Breakfast After 1st Period, which could not continue temporarily due to school construction. Ciarla said this service should be up and running again shortly as a result of positive feedback.

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(continued from *Expanding Breakfast reaches new Heights in Rural and Urban Districts*)

“The kids love to get involved,” she said. “Nutrition is education. I think it is our responsibility to make sure children receive nutritious meals. We can make meals an important part of the day.”

Harrisburg Students Benefit From Classroom Breakfast

David Lloyd, food service director at Harrisburg School District, has found that alternative breakfast options can also work very well in an urban district serving 8,700 students and 79 percent free and reduced meals.

Also in the spring of 2002, Lloyd implemented a pilot classroom breakfast program in two elementary schools for a two-month period. This alternative service resulted in 80 percent breakfast participation, up from the usual 37 percent district-wide participation.

Initiation of the district’s successful classroom breakfast program, the first change to the program since it began in 1980, involved several preliminary steps, Lloyd said. First, he not only utilized the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association breakfast grants, he also ordered got milk?[®] get breakfast! insulated bags for transporting and keeping milk and juice cold. Lloyd also found it very valuable to first see alternative breakfast programs in action. He visited two Maryland districts so that he could discuss the program with other directors and observe classroom breakfast

himself. He then presented his findings to teachers in the elementary schools where he planned to pilot the program.

While some teachers had initial concerns about breakfast cutting into instructional time, they, along with other school staff, soon realized the 20-minute classroom breakfast resulted in a quieter and more productive morning.

Teachers found they were able to take attendance without students crowding around their desks.

- School office staff noticed less commotion and fewer discipline problems in the mornings.
- The school nurse experienced fewer visits since students were not hungry in the morning.
- Students were more attentive during morning class time and there were fewer behavioral problems.

From a business perspective, labor costs were only minimally affected by the need for staff to deliver and pick up the breakfast items. The reimbursement from the higher number of free and reduced breakfast meals served covered these costs, Lloyd said.

With these outcomes, Lloyd plans to expand the program to more elementary schools this year, and to soon offer Grab ‘n’ Go breakfasts in high schools.



Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association provided milk coolers to Mahanoy District. These coolers are used for alternative breakfast service.