

Orange County Sees Rise In Breakfast Numbers



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Nancy Pfaff, R.N., has a cure for the common headache or stomachache.

Breakfast!

"It's all ages but it's mostly in high school," Pfaff said. "Kids were coming in first thing in the morning to see the school nurse and we would say, 'It's something simple here, guys. You need to eat in order to feel better, in order to learn and for your brain to function.'"

Pfaff is the Children's Medical Resource Manager for the Health Central Foundation School Nurse Program in Orange County. About nine years ago, Health Central realized that school nurses no longer had a presence on campuses.

Registered nurses were sent to four schools that had high rates of students on free or reduced lunch plans. Since then, nurses have expanded to 32 schools, confirming the true source of so many aches and pains.



"What we were hearing is that there is no food in the house or (students) didn't have time to eat because they had to go to work last night," Pfaff said. "They weren't getting proper nutrition and we were seeing kids who weren't eating breakfast."

Pfaff worked with Orange County School Food Service Director Lora Gilbert and West Orange High School Cafeteria Manager Nettie Watkins on ways to improve breakfast participation.

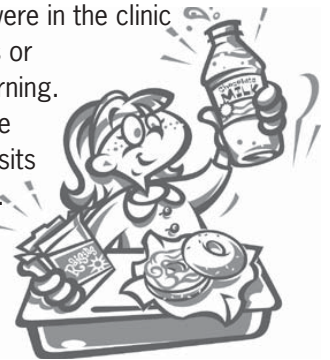
They presented the troubling breakfast numbers to West Orange High and the principal agreed to run a one-month pilot program. Portable carts carrying sausage biscuits, cheese burritos, bagels with cream cheese, milk and juice made their way to the campus' busiest area. Students who didn't finish their meal by the start of first period could do so in their classroom. Pfaff said there was a significant increase in breakfast participation and the teachers also bought into the concept.

"In the beginning of the pilot the teachers were apprehensive about having food in the classroom.



We asked them if they would rather have the students missing class because they were in the clinic with complaints of headaches or stomachaches or in class learning.

Once they saw that there were less absences due to clinic visits they bought into the program. Attendance and participation in class improved."



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