



## School Breakfast Program: Improve child health and school performance

### Highlights

- ✓ A nutritious school breakfast helps students pay attention in class, decreases tardiness and absenteeism, and improves school performance.
- ✓ Supplemental state funding at the level of three cents per breakfast would allow participating NH schools to offer healthier breakfast choices to more students.
- ✓ NH would benefit as a state if more students had access to a nutritious breakfast at the start of each school day.

[Issue overview](#)

[Action plan](#)

[What can I do?](#)

[To learn more](#)

[References](#)

### Issue overview

Students who eat a nutritious morning meal are more alert and ready to learn than those who don't. Research shows that breakfast served in schools:

- Reduces hunger and food insecurity.
- Helps students score higher on tests and improves grades.
- Makes it easier for students to pay attention in class.
- Decreases tardiness and absenteeism.
- Prevents overweight and obesity in children.

NH would benefit as a state if more students had access to a nutritious breakfast at the start of each school day.

School districts that participate in the School Breakfast Program receive federal funding from the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA). In NH, 34,000 students qualify for free or reduced-price meals through this program. The USDA provides funding of between \$0.23 and \$1.23 per breakfast served. The school breakfast program helps ensure that children who go to school ready to learn can do so without the distraction of a hungry stomach.

By providing supplemental state funding of only three cents per breakfast served, participating New Hampshire schools could offer more nutritious choices: fresh fruit rather than pre-packaged fruit products, for example. Supplemental funding would also allow participating schools to offer breakfasts to more students.

### **Action plan**

Legislation has been filed (House Bill 1249) to create a state reimbursement program for the school breakfast program at a rate of three cents per breakfast served. This reimbursement will allow higher quality, nutritious foods to be added to school breakfasts. Only districts that have completed their wellness policy – as mandated by federal law – will be eligible to receive reimbursement from the state.

### **What can I do?**

- ✓ **Share information** on how improved health can effectively contribute to academic preparation and student performance.
- ✓ **Build support** for school breakfast programs among school administrators, food service directors, parents, children, and your neighbors.
- ✓ **Support legislative efforts**, including the school breakfast state reimbursement program, by contacting legislators (e-mail, phone or in person), and attending hearings to testify in favor of school nutrition. (Hint: Use the Children's Alliance legislative action center to contact your representatives: <http://www.childrennh.org/capwiz.php>.)
- ✓ **Write opinion editorials or letters to the editor** in support of a nutritious school breakfast.
- ✓ **Read the Child Advocacy Updates and Alerts and track the effort.** (To sign up to receive these e-mails, send an e-mail to [childrensalliancenes@childrennh.org](mailto:childrensalliancenes@childrennh.org) and ask to be added to the e-mail list.)

### **To learn more**

Information about the Action for Healthy Kids campaign in NH is online at:  
[http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/state\\_profile.php?state=NH](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/state_profile.php?state=NH).

The School Nutrition Association web site is at: [www.schoolnutrition.org](http://www.schoolnutrition.org).

The Food Research Council "School Breakfast Report Card: 2005":  
[http://www.frac.org/pdf/2005\\_SBP.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/2005_SBP.pdf).

### **References**

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2. Murphy, JM et al. "Effects of a universally free, in-classroom school breakfast program: Results from the Maryland Meals for Achievement Evaluation, Initial Report, May 1999.
3. Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, "The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning, <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org> (search "past issues" for 1998 vol. 152 no.9).
4. The Food Research Council "School Breakfast Report Card: 2005,"  
[http://www.frac.org/pdf/2005\\_SBP.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/2005_SBP.pdf).