

MAKING THE GRADE WITH BREAKFAST

Pennsylvania Hunger Action Releases Annual School Breakfast Report Card

Which school districts offer a nutritious breakfast to their students? The **Pennsylvania School Breakfast Report Card** released recently by the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center is a comprehensive review and rating of school districts, based on their participation of the federal School Breakfast Program.

Multiple research studies have shown that children have the best chance for academic success if they start their days with nutritious breakfasts. While breakfast is traditionally consumed before leaving home in the morning, other factors – such as parents' work schedules and children's lack of appetite early in the morning – often interfere.

"School breakfast also is a key ingredient in a health and anti-obesity agenda" said Sue Mitchem of the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. "It lessens the temptation to snack on less healthy food or to overeat at other meals. And for children from low-income families, school-based meals serve the additional purpose of providing food that parents may not be able to provide."

Most school district personnel understand the need for a nutritious breakfast. It is not difficult to do and federal and state funds are available to cover the entire cost. Yet there is a wide disparity in how Pennsylvania's school districts implement the breakfast program. Some districts, such as Farrell Area School district in Mercer County, serve 88 percent of their students everyday. Others, such as Pottsville Area School District in Schuylkill County, do not even offer the program. Some districts offer the program in some school buildings but not in others.

For students from families whose income is below 130 percent of poverty, breakfast is free. Students from families between 130 and 185 percent of poverty pay no more than 30 cents per breakfast. Students from families with incomes above 185 percent of poverty pay the full price determined by the local district.

Many schools are serving breakfast and very successfully. During 2003-04 Pennsylvania schools served 2.6 million more breakfasts – a seven percent increase – than they did during the previous year. Yet according to the **National School Breakfast Scorecard** published annually by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Pennsylvania lags behind most states, ranking 38th nationally in its provision of breakfast to low-income children.

In addition to citing schools that are not providing needed nutritional support, the **Pennsylvania School Breakfast Report Card** gives recognition to schools that are offering exemplary breakfast programs. Key findings are summarized and an abbreviated copy of **Report Card**. The full report is available at www.pahunger.org. See also article on page ____ "School Updates..."

Star Performers

"Star Performers" are school districts that integrate breakfast into the school day encouraging all children to participate; they are districts where average daily breakfast participation was at least 50 percent of average daily lunch participation.

Leading the way in 2003-04 for the fourth consecutive year was Farrell Area School District in Mercer County. New "Star Performers" in this year's report include the Homer-Central School District in Indiana County, the Mahanoy School District in Schuylkill County, the Harmony Area School District in Clearfield County, the Conemaugh Township School District in Somerset County and the Cornell School District in Allegheny County.

Getting the Job Done

Schools with many children from low-income families have a special responsibility because of the likelihood that some of those children come from homes where little food available for breakfast.

Among school districts in which at least 20 percent of the children are low-income, thirteen stood out for serving breakfast to at least half of those students. Again topping this list of schools that are "Getting the Job Done" is Farrell Area School District; 86 percent of its low-income students had breakfast at school every day.

New to "Getting the Job Done" in this year's **Report Card** are Harmony Area School District in Clearfield County, Homer-Center School District in Indiana County, Forest School District in Forest County and Harrisburg City in Dauphin County.

Moving Up!

Eleven school districts began offering the breakfast program last year including four school districts from last year's "Failing the Children" list. By starting breakfast, these eleven districts joined others that have made the link between nutrition, health and academics.

Also meriting special recognition for significantly growing their programs last year. They include: Allentown City School District, Philadelphia City School District, the Reading School District (Berks), and the Bethlehem School District (Lehigh) for significantly increasing average daily breakfast attendance.

Improvement Needed

Twenty-four school districts with at least 20 percent low-income students are cited for reaching only a tiny fraction of those students with breakfast.

This list of districts with much work to do includes West York Area School District (York County), Kennett Consolidated School District (Chester County) and the Easton School District (Northampton County).

Sayre Area School District in Bradford County, which led this list, has already begun to make needed improvements, piloting breakfast at the end of the 2003-04 school year and expanding to another building during the current year. Two other schools on the "Improvement Needed" list (Derry Area in Westmoreland County and Cranberry Area in Venango County) are also beginning or expanding breakfast this year.

Failing the Children

Twenty-eight districts with 20 percent or more low-income children did not participate at all in the breakfast program. Pottsville Area School District, with 1,200 low-income children and no breakfast program, heads this list.

In contrast Dubois School District (Clearfield County) will not be on the "Failing the Children" list in the future. In September 2004 it began breakfast in every one of its buildings. Four other school districts from the 2002-03 "Failing the Children" list began offering breakfast last year and thus appear in this year's "Moving Up" category.

In the 28 school districts on this list 35,666 low-income children do not have access to a nutritious breakfast at their schools. Without a nutritious breakfast these children, along with their friends from families with higher incomes, are missing a very important component for success in school.

Star Performers

Making Breakfast a Regular Part of the School Day

| | Percent of Children Receiving Breakfast |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Farrell Area (Mercer) | 88 percent |
| Midland Borough (Beaver) | 81 percent |
| Western Beaver County (Beaver) | 76 percent |
| Homer-Center (Indiana) | 70 percent |
| Mahanoy Area (Schuylkill) | 67 percent |
| Aliquippa (Beaver) | 64 percent |
| Harmony Area (Clearfield) | 62 percent |
| Sto-Rox (Allegheny) | 59 percent |
| Conemaugh Township (Somerset) | 57 percent |
| Jeanette City (Westmoreland) | 56 percent |
| Harrisburg City (Dauphin) | 55 percent |
| Cornell (Allegheny) | 54 percent |
| Philadelphia City (Philadelphia) | 50 percent |

Getting the Job Done

Serving Breakfast to Most Low-Income Children

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Farrell Area (Mercer) | 86 percent served daily |
| Western Beaver County (Beaver) | 68 percent served daily |
| Midland Borough (Beaver) | 64 percent served daily |
| Harmony Area (Clearfield) | 60 percent served daily |
| Homer-Center (Indiana) | 58 percent served daily |
| Conemaugh Township (Somerset) | 57 percent served daily |
| Sto-Rox (Allegheny) | 55 percent served daily |
| Jeanette City (Westmoreland) | 55 percent served daily |
| Forest Area (Forest) | 52 percent served daily |
| Wallenpaupack Area (Wayne) | 51 percent served daily |
| Cornell (Allegheny) | 51 percent served daily |
| Aliquippa (Beaver) | 51 percent served daily |
| Harrisburg City (Dauphin) | 50 percent served daily |

Moving Up

Starting or Growing Breakfast Programs Last Year

| County | School District | Daily Breakfasts |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Philadelphia | Philadelphia City | 915 increase |
| Lehigh | Allentown City | 661 increase |
| Northampton | Bethlehem Area | 349 increase |
| Berks | Reading | 338 increase |

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Schuylkill | Mahanoy Area | 273 increase |
| Monroe | East Stroudsburg Area | 256 increase |
| Luzerne | Hazleton Area | 239 increase |
| Indiana | Homer-Center | 204 increase |
| Northumberland | Shamokin Area | 322 new program |
| Berks | Brandywine Heights Area | 284 new program |
| Adams | Upper Adams | 183 new program |
| Bradford | Sayre Area | 166 new program |
| Chester | Avon Grove | 158 new program |
| Lebanon | Annville-Cleona | 74 new program |
| Venango | Cranberry Area | 57 new program |

Improvement Needed

Lots of Need – Few Breakfasts Served

| | Needy Students | Percent |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Sayre Area (Bradford) * | 426 | 5 percent |
| Mifflinburg Area (Union) | 592 | 5 percent |
| Kennett Consolidated | 1,048 | 5 percent |
| Derry Area (Westmoreland)* | 964 | 6 percent |
| Easton Area (Northampton) | 2,333 | 6 percent |
| Upper Darby (Delaware) | 3,586 | 6 percent |
| Cranberry Area (Venango) * | 505 | 7 percent |
| West York Area (York) | 642 | 8 percent |
| Bangor Area (Northampton) | 687 | 9 percent |
| Lehigh Area (Carbon) | 542 | 10 percent |

* These school districts are currently working to improve their breakfast program participation.

Failing the Children
No Breakfast Despite the Need

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pottsville Area (Schuylkill) | 40 percent low-income |
| Dubois Area (Clearfield) | 37 percent low-income |
| Rockwood Area (Somerset) | 36 percent low-income |
| North Schuylkill Area (Schuylkill) | 34 percent low-income |
| Riverside (Lackawanna) | 33 percent low-income |
| Johnsonburg Area (Elk) | 33 percent low-income |
| Forbes Road (Fulton) | 33 percent low-income |
| Fort Leboeuf (Erie) | 32 percent low-income |
| Gettysburg Area (Adams) | 27 percent low-income |
| Kiski Area (Westmoreland) | 27 percent low-income |