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Contact: Alisa Costa  
(518) 436-8757 x 22  
alisa.costa@nutritionconsortium.org

**Participation in School Breakfast Program Increases in New York State**

*Report by anti-hunger organization shows growth in School Breakfast Program, says State is still missing out on millions in federal dollars, highlights ways to increase participation.*

Albany, NY – April 20, 2011: Participation in the federally and state-funded School Breakfast Program grew to nearly 470,000 students served every day during the 2009-2010 school year in New York State, an increase of over 23,000 students daily from the prior school year. Despite this increase, the number of low-income students eating school breakfast still remains low. Less than 1 in 3 low-income students who qualified to eat free or reduced-price school meals actually eat school breakfast, according to “Shine with School Breakfast”, an annual analysis of the School Breakfast Program published by the Nutrition Consortium of NYS.

“Low participation in the School Breakfast Program not only means that low-income students are missing out on essential fuel for learning, but it also means that New York State is missing out on millions of federal dollars,” said Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Child Nutrition Program Specialist at the Nutrition Consortium of NYS. “If an additional 10% of all the low-income children currently eating school lunch also ate school breakfast, NYS could receive more than \$9.8 million more in federal reimbursement annually.”

The report recommends specific actions that schools can take to boost the number of students eating school breakfast; including offering “universally free” breakfast to all students and serving breakfast in the classroom. Dozens of school districts across New York State, including New York City, have adopted breakfast in the classroom in some schools as a way to serve more students in a stigma-free environment, where students can eat and socialize with their friends, turn in homework to their teacher, and/or listen to morning announcements.

The Buffalo City School District launched breakfast in the classroom in 28 elementary schools this past September; where a total of 21,000 students are now eating school breakfast daily. Participating schools have already noted both a decrease in disciplinary issues and an increase in school attendance.

Kim Roll, Food Service Director of the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District says, “We serve classroom breakfast in two of our schools. I encourage schools to try it out because serving breakfast in the classroom is a successful way of making sure all students get the nutrition they need to start the school day.”

Numerous studies consistently prove that students who eat a nutritious morning meal at school have physical, academic, and social advantages such as reduced hunger, increased academic scores, reduced school disciplinary referrals, reduced school absenteeism, and improved nutritional intake.

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**Linda Bopp - Executive Director**

**Phone: (518) 436-8757  
Fax: (518) 427-7992**

“In our schools, we aim to serve a variety of nutritious breakfast items such fresh fruit, whole wheat muffins, fruit and yogurt parfaits, and low or no fat milk,” said Patricia Cacace, Director of Food & Nutrition at Freeport Public Schools. “With over 60% of our students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals, we are committed to offering them a nutritious morning meal option.”

“Hunger is a reality for too many children in NYS,” said Rupright. According to the Food Research and Action Center, more than 1 in 5 households with children in NYS lack enough money to buy food they need. Eating school breakfast can particularly help low-income students, by both preventing hunger and providing essential nutrition to grow and learn.

The full report, Shine With School Breakfast: An Overview of the School Breakfast Program in NYS School Year 2009-2010 can be downloaded at [www.nutritionconsortium.org](http://www.nutritionconsortium.org).

*The Nutrition Consortium of NYS is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to fight hunger in New York State through outreach, public education, policy analysis and research.*

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