

# Starting the Day Right:

## Increasing School Breakfast Participation in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties



**David Lazere**

Emerson National Hunger Fellow

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of SANTA CLARA and  
SAN MATEO COUNTIES

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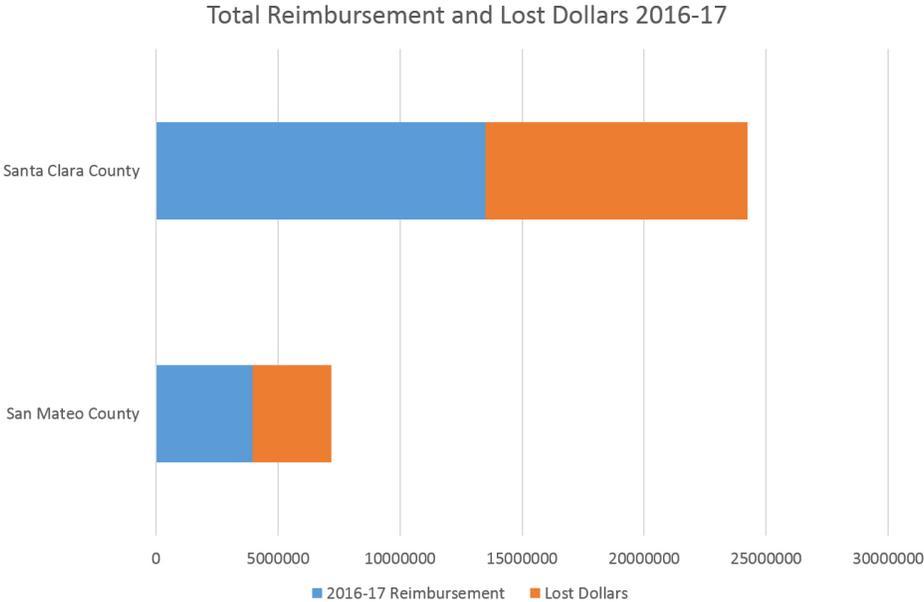
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# Executive Summary

More than one-third of Santa Clara and San Mateo County students are eligible to receive free or reduced price school meals, but in the 2015-16 school year on average only 36% of those students ate breakfast each day. Educators and child nutrition advocates agree that breakfast is important both for academic success and overall student health. Many low-income students who do not eat breakfast at school will not make up that lost nutrition anywhere else. If last year Santa Clara and San Mateo County schools had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches, they would have reached 40,000 more students and served 6.5 million more meals, leveraging an additional \$14 million in federal and state meal reimbursements.

These additional meals are clearly needed, but many students face a variety of barriers, from bell schedules to social stigma, that prevent them from eating at school. While breakfast is generally served in the cafeteria before school begins, this report recommends: (1) that school districts implement a Breakfast After the Bell model that integrates breakfast into the school day and school building; and (2) that schools with a high percentage of free and reduced price eligible students provide Universal Free Breakfast as well.

Schools and districts around the country have successfully made these changes to their breakfast model, dramatically increasing their breakfast participation while remaining financially stable. These changes require buy-in from school and district leadership as well as support and input from the entire school community, but when implemented successfully have the potential to make a huge positive impact on the lives of students.



# Introduction

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In the Bay Area—a place whose name has become shorthand for the tech industry and wealth—it is too easy to forget that poverty and inequality remain serious issues, and that many people, a disproportionate number of them children, go hungry every day. Many of the educators and child nutrition advocates who contributed to this report shared the sentiment that in an area as wealthy as Silicon Valley, students and families experiencing hardship are in greater danger of slipping through the cracks. It is precisely because of this wealth that schools, non-profits and elected officials should be even more compelled to protect the most vulnerable populations.

Over one-third of Santa Clara and San Mateo County public school students live in low-income households (earning less than 185 percent of the federal poverty line). This amounts to more than 130,000 children living in households that likely struggle to meet their daily nutrition needs, especially given the high cost of living and housing in the region. Housing costs have also concentrated low-income families into a handful of relatively small geographic areas: nearly two thirds of low-income students in these two counties



attend schools that are majority low-income. In the last few years, the number of low-income students in the Bay Area has decreased as families are priced out of their homes and forced to move further south or east, but the need for those who stay remains just as acute.<sup>i</sup>

About 40 percent of low-income households in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties are food insecure—without consistent and reliable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate meals—and many more are just a paycheck or two away from missing meals.<sup>ii</sup> Food insecurity is a chronic issue for low-income communities across the state, but is especially serious in an area where housing prices have risen steadily and affordable areas have drastically shrunk. Many of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties' low-income families spend more than half their paychecks on rent, meaning that all too often parents are forced to make the impossible choice between paying for food and paying for housing.<sup>iii</sup> Families with the most severe need are eligible to receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (known in California as CalFresh), which provides households with resources to purchase food. Families face some unique barriers when applying to CalFresh, however—such as complex verification processes and quarterly reporting requirements—and compared to equivalent programs in other states, low-income Californians remain severely under enrolled in the program.<sup>iv</sup> There are also many families who still struggle to pay for food, but do not qualify for CalFresh benefits sufficient to meet their needs due to their income level or other eligibility factors.

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs intends to fill these gaps. Students in households making less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line, as well as those who meet a handful of other criteria—such as students experiencing homelessness, migrant students, or those in foster care—are eligible for free school meals. Students in households

making between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible to receive meals at a reduced price. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reimburses school districts for all meals served, providing different reimbursement rates for paid, reduced price, and free meals (2015-16 rates can be found in the Appendices).

These programs have been largely successful in meeting children's food needs for lunch: 70 out of 100 low-income students around the country are served lunch at school every day. However, though the vast majority of schools that offer lunch also have breakfast programs, only 35 out of those 100 students will also eat breakfast. In Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties that number is only slightly higher. There are many reasons for this meal gap, from logistical and transportation issues to social stigma. Whatever the reasons, this is one of the most pressing issues facing our schools, and it is vital that we address it. Not only is access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food a basic human right, but children who eat breakfast are healthier, better behaved, more successful academically, and have better outcomes later in life.<sup>vii</sup>

Second Harvest Food Bank believes that anyone who needs a healthy meal should be able to get one and is committed to working toward our vision of a hunger-free community. Part of the Food Bank's three year strategic plan to reach its goal of serving 100,000 more people—and 15 million more meals—annually by 2019, is to provide resources and support for schools that are interested in increasing the number of students reached by school breakfast. We believe that by helping schools build capacity and reach more students, we can achieve our goal of serving three million more meals each year through school breakfast. (If school breakfast participation in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties caught up to current lunch participation, this goal would be met more than twice over).

To that end, this report is meant as evidence of the importance of school meals that champions of school breakfast in our community can use to win over their school or district. It is also meant as a resource to shed light on what successful breakfast programs look like on the ground, and how schools have successfully increased participation in these programs. In addition, it points readers toward tools that will help them implement Breakfast After the Bell or Universal Free Breakfast in their communities. The recommendations in this report draw heavily on local knowledge in addition to research from state and national child nutrition advocates, and aims to be as comprehensive as possible. We recognize the unique strengths, barriers and opportunities of each school and district, and so we do not expect every recommendation in this report to apply in every context. But we hope that any person who reads this report with the goal of increasing breakfast participation in their community will find something useful within it.

# The State of School Breakfast Today

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- 36.1 percent of Santa Clara and San Mateo County students are certified to receive free or reduced price (FRPM) breakfasts and lunches.
- On an average day, Santa Clara and San Mateo County schools reach only 36.7 percent of their FRPM eligible students with school breakfast.
- If every student who ate a free or reduced price lunch in the 2015-16 school year also ate breakfast, Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties would have received an additional \$14 million in federal reimbursements and served 6.5 million more meals.

In California, three out of five students are eligible for free or reduced price school meals. In Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, that number is closer to one-third (34 percent in San Mateo, 39 percent in Santa Clara).<sup>v</sup> However, low-income households in the Bay Area are just as likely to be food insecure as anywhere else in California.

Nearly every Santa Clara and San Mateo County school offers some sort of school breakfast. There is a diversity of breakfast preparation and provision models among schools. Most offer breakfast in the cafeteria before the first bell, while others serve breakfast in classrooms, hallways, and between morning class periods. Some schools cook all their meals from scratch, while others prepare them at a central location or contract their meals to outside food service agencies (or a combination of all of these). Some schools go above and beyond USDA meal requirements in their commitment to providing nutritious and tasty meals by banning processed foods, serving daily fruit and salad bars and participating in farm to school initiatives. A few school districts with a high percentage of low-income students have used Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act to offer breakfast and lunch free to every student.

Through these various models and practices millions of free and reduced price breakfasts are served in Santa Clara and San Mateo County schools every year, but there is room for improvement. These schools reach, on average, 36.5 percent of eligible students for breakfast, compared to 67.8 percent for lunch. This means that only half of the students receiving free or reduced price lunch also receive school breakfast. If every school in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties served the same number of free and reduced price breakfasts as lunches, they would have reached 40,000 more students and served 6.5 million more meals in 2015-16, leveraging an additional \$14 million in federal reimbursements. For each additional dollar of reimbursement, districts on average make 33 cents in profit, which can be saved or put toward menu enhancements, labor, or equipment upgrades.

# Why School Breakfast is Important

Research supports what educators in our schools see every day—that regular access to nutritious food is a prerequisite for children’s wellbeing and health, and vital for student success. The connection between nutrition and educational attainment was first recognized by the federal government in 1946 when President Harry Truman signed into law the National School Lunch Act, which reimbursed schools for providing free lunch to qualifying low-income children. The government reaffirmed its commitment to food equity with the passage of Lyndon Johnson’s 1966 Child Nutrition Act, which in recognition of the success of the National School Lunch Program expanded the model to include breakfast. Today, about 95 percent of schools offer lunch and 90 percent of those schools also serve breakfast, with many offering after school snacks and supper as well. These school nutrition programs together make up the second largest federal food-based social safety net program, behind only the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps).<sup>vii</sup>

IMPROVED	DECREASED
 Cognitive Function	 Risk for Obesity and Diabetes
 Academic Achievement	 Aggressive Behavior
 School Attendance	 Delinquency
 Diet and Physical Health	 Suspensions
 Emotional Health	 Tardiness

Many students who participate in these federal meal programs get the majority of their daily caloric and nutritional intake from school meals, which is why breakfast is so crucial. Students who miss breakfast at school more often than not will not make up those calories later in the day, or will replace them with processed snacks and other less nutritious foods.<sup>viii</sup> Additionally, students who go hungry in the morning will spend more than half of their classroom time distracted and unable to fully engage and benefit from the instruction. Lack of access to school breakfast also exacerbates existing racial and economic disparities in educational opportunity. Low-income students and students of color are also more likely to be food insecure, to live in food deserts—areas without access to fresh produce and healthy food options—and to suffer from health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and asthma.<sup>ix,x</sup> However, students who participate in school breakfast experience benefits across a range of metrics, from health to attendance to behavior to academic success.

**Health.** Eating school breakfast almost always improves the overall quality of students' diets—reducing fat intake and increasing vitamin intake while holding calorie count the same. Regular breakfast consumption is also associated with reduced likelihood of vitamin, potassium, and iron deficiencies, as well as obesity. Schools with high breakfast participation also tend to have fewer visits to the school nurse.<sup>xi</sup>

**Attendance.** Studies have found that students who eat breakfast attend one to two more days of school each year, and are less likely to be chronically absent. These positive effects of breakfast on attendance tend to be magnified in higher poverty schools.<sup>xii</sup>

**Behavior.** Students who eat breakfast are perceived by teachers to be more energetic and on-task, a sentiment often echoed by students themselves. Schools that have successfully increased their school breakfast participation have also seen decreases in disciplinary actions and suspensions.<sup>xii</sup>

**Academics.** Many schools that have successfully increased school breakfast participation have seen improved grades and statistically significant increases in math and reading scores on standardized tests the same year as the increase.<sup>xii</sup>

The next section of the report describes in more detail how schools have increased their breakfast participation while keeping their meal programs financially viable. Many schools, especially those with higher numbers of free and reduced price eligible students, are able to make money by increasing participation. Equally important however is that fact that whenever there are students who could benefit from a meal and are not getting one, the school is leaving money on the table, money that would otherwise go directly to those students' health and wellbeing.

**“My life work is feeding kids! Often there are barriers to accomplishing this goal for the neediest in our communities. Partnering with Second Harvest Food Bank to provide food service equipment to school districts in low-income area has led to a doubling of breakfasts served. The impact is priceless: hungry kids are getting the nutrition they need and are ready to learn in school!”**

**- Martha O'Rourke**, District Manager, Sodexo Education

# Increasing Breakfast Participation

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## Why Participation is often low

Today, 87% of California schools that offer lunch also offer breakfast. Additionally, more and more educators, nutrition advocates and elected officials are recognizing the importance of eating breakfast, and the adverse effects that going hungry in the morning can have on a child’s academic achievement and overall health. And yet, too many students are still starting the school day without breakfast. If everyone agrees that eating daily nutritious breakfast is important for children, why is breakfast participation in schools so stubbornly low? Several factors often act together to create the low participation rates seen in many schools:

- Students are not able to get to school early enough due to public transportation issues or parent work schedules;
- Lines for breakfast are too long, or bell schedules do not give students enough time to eat;
- Students are not hungry early in the morning (a particularly large issue in middle and high school);
- Students feel pressure to socialize rather than wait in line for breakfast before classes start;
- In schools serving immigrant communities, households in which some members are undocumented may not feel safe filling out free and reduced price meal applications; and
- There is often stigma against eating school meals, especially in wealthier schools where a smaller percentage of students qualify for free or reduced priced meals, or where many students eat at home.

## Recommendations

Despite these barriers, many schools are able to successfully reach the majority of their low-income students for breakfast by adopting best practice strategies proven to increase participation. Many of the educators and nutrition directors consulted for this report said that their students were hungry and wanted to eat, and that increasing participation requires making structural changes in the way breakfast is served. This section of the report seeks to shed light on what schools with high participation numbers do differently, as well as what steps schools and districts can take to increase participation in their breakfast programs.

Offering breakfast free to all students while at the same time implementing a Breakfast After the Bell model that integrates breakfast into the school day are two of the most effective and efficient methods for schools and districts to increase breakfast participation.

**The Goal:** Every FRPM eligible student who takes a school lunch also takes a breakfast

**Recommendations:** Breakfast After the Bell + Universal Free Breakfast

## **Universal Free Breakfast**

Schools with a high percentage of free and reduced price eligible students can choose to offer free breakfast to all students, regardless of eligibility status. When students do not need to swipe in before picking up their breakfasts and do not need to fill out free and reduced meal applications each year, schools can streamline the breakfast process while reducing administrative and staffing costs. There are several ways for schools and districts to implement Universal Free Breakfast—such as nonpricing, Provision 2, and the Community Eligibility Provision—that are described in more detail later in this section.



### **Best in Class: Breakfast in the Classroom, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)**

In LAUSD, more than half a million students qualify for free and reduced price meals. Five years ago, less than 30% of those students were eating breakfast each day. To address the problem,

in 2012 the district decided to implement Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC), and made it mandatory for every school – elementary, middle, and high – where more than 20% of students were FRPM eligible.

The program began districtwide in the 2015-16 school year, and today, LAUSD runs the largest BIC Program in the Country. Breakfast participation is already up 350% from 2012, and, of the 630 schools currently serving BIC, 93% met the district's goal of serving 70% of their FRPM students, earning the district around \$100M in additional funding!

The program has been extremely well received by teachers, principals, custodial staff, parents, and the students themselves. Teachers have found ways to incorporate BIC into their schedule without losing instructional time, and in many cases BIC has actually reduced mess and clean up time. Schools have seen increased attendance, while students report that they have more energy, are more engaged in class, and feel a stronger sense of community in the classroom.

## **Breakfast After the Bell**

Breakfast After the Bell models integrate breakfast into the school day and school building, so that students do not have to make a choice between eating breakfast, socializing with friends, and getting to class on time. There are several different Breakfast After the Bell models and many different ways of implementing each model. Schools have the freedom to serve Breakfast after the Bell in the way that best fits their specific contexts and needs.

**Second Chance Breakfast:** Breakfast is offered mid-morning, between class periods. Second Chance breakfast can either replace or supplement breakfast before the bell. In elementary schools, teachers may bring students to the lunchroom and walk them through the line. In middle and high schools, Second Chance usually takes place during a morning recess or passing period, and the students can choose whether or not to eat.

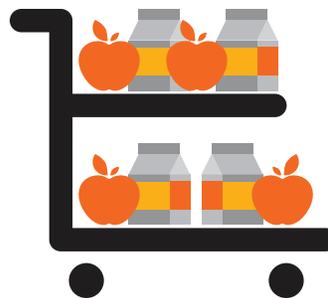
**Grab and Go:** Students pick up breakfast from portable carts placed in high traffic areas such as school entrances, hallways, and even bus stops. They pick up bagged breakfasts from these carts on the way to class and can eat in the lunchroom, hallway, or at their desks. Grab and Go can happen before or after the bell, and is especially useful in schools where the cafeteria is far from the classrooms or the school entrance.

**Breakfast in the Classroom:** Students eat breakfast at their desks during homeroom or first period. In some schools teachers administer the breakfast, where in others more of the responsibility falls on the students, cafeteria staff, or parent volunteers. This model results in the highest increases in breakfast participation. It is most popular in elementary schools but can work in higher grades as well.



### **SECOND CHANCE BREAKFAST**

Serve students during  
a mid-morning break



### **GRAB N' GO BREAKFAST**

Let kids grab quick  
and healthy meals on  
the way to class



### **BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM**

Serve breakfast when  
and where all kids  
are able to eat

*Source: California Food Policy Advocates*

Breakfast After the Bell and Universal Free Breakfast are both flexible options, and schools can choose to take on one or both in whatever form makes the most sense for them. When considering the model that will reach the most students, schools and districts should consider when breakfast will be offered, where breakfast will be offered, and how students will pay. Breakfast After the Bell and Universal Free Breakfast complement each other and so when possible, doing both is ideal. But done separately, each can still have a strong positive impact on breakfast participation.

**“I wasn’t sure about Breakfast in the Classroom at first, but now I love it. The kids are in charge of everything—pickup, cleanup, returning the carts—all I do is sign the papers. Most kids eat, and it’s a great communal activity that starts the day off on a calm note. I start class while the kids are eating, so it never cuts into instructional time.”**

- 6th grade Santa Clara County teacher

## Menu Changes

Providing a wide variety of hot and cold menu items can also help to increase and sustain participation. Menu changes alone do not address structural barriers to breakfast participation, and school menus are often constrained by kitchen capacity and choice of vendor, which is why this is not a primary recommendation of this report. That said and despite these restraints, many schools and districts in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties have found ways to make menu changes that led to higher participation.

Many of the nutrition directors consulted for this report said that their menus are constantly evolving, and that they try to solicit as much feedback from students as possible when searching for menu items that are both nutritious and appealing. Nutrition staff at Mountain View-Whisman spoke about “stealth food” items, which appeal to students but are actually healthy—such as an all-beef, preservative free corndog made with local beef. Another common theme was the importance of serving food that is culturally appropriate. Some directors spoke about instances in which Vietnamese students would not eat rice noodles made with whole wheat, or students who did not eat breakfast burritos until the cafeteria staff had the idea to provide hot sauce.

Some schools have held contests where cafeteria staff introduce potential menu items, and the students vote on which they want to incorporate into the menu the following year. In other districts, nutrition departments work with student leadership groups, who can promote school meals and get a pulse on which food items students prefer.

Some schools attribute their high participation numbers directly to their menus, while others have seen a single menu change create a noticeable increase in participation. One San Jose Unified school with above average Second Chance breakfast participation makes a point of offering a wide variety of options every day from which students can choose. South San Francisco Unified School District saw breakfast participation in its high schools double after the district started serving sausage, potatoes, and pancakes cooked from scratch. The ability of schools to change the menu mostly depends on their staff and kitchen capabilities, but where there is room in the budget menu changes can be a cost-effective way to entice students into the cafeteria.



## Increasing revenue

Many schools do not feel they have the resources to make these changes, or are worried about the additional equipment and staffing costs. However, Breakfast After the Bell and Universal Free Breakfast both streamline the breakfast provision process, increasing efficiency as participation grows. Universal Free Breakfast in particular allows schools to reduce administrative costs by eliminating the need to process free and reduced price meal applications or to have students sign in before taking meals. It is also generally true that the more students eat, the lower the school's per-meal cost.<sup>xiii</sup> This is because schools must pay for the fixed costs of breakfast—such as kitchen equipment and staff—whether they are serving 1 percent or 100 percent of their students.

In practice many schools that implement these strategies are able to break even or even generate revenue. This profit can help the food service program remain financially solvent, or can be invested back into the meal program. On average, for each additional dollar in reimbursement, school meal programs will spend 67 cents on meal, labor, and administrative costs. The other 33 cents can be saved for years where budgets are tighter, or can be put towards menu enhancements, equipment upgrades, or additional labor. This is especially true for schools with a high percentage (>75 percent) of free and reduced price students.<sup>xiv</sup> But for schools and districts concerned about cost, there are other ways to increase revenue, as outlined below.

### **Certify more eligible students for free and reduced-price school meals**

One important way to maximize revenue is to make sure every student eligible for free or reduced price meals is certified. Eligibility is most commonly determined through a household income application. Students in families making below 130 percent the federal poverty line qualify for free meals, while those making between 130 percent and 185 percent qualify for reduced price meals. Households must fill out applications each year to stay certified.

Schools have many options to increase the number of applications they receive, such as robo-calling and sending home flyers, putting out ads in the local newspaper, and helping families fill out applications at back to school nights and other parent events. Some schools will also follow up with families who applied in previous years or have unpaid meal bills. Mountain View-Whisman School District staff in schools, libraries, and school district buildings are trained to help parents fill out online applications. San Jose Unified School District has started subsidizing SAT and AP test fees for all families who submit an application, regardless of whether they qualify.

Another way for schools to increase the number of certified students is through a process called direct certification. Certain groups of students are considered “categorically eligible” for free school meals, and can be certified by the school without filling out an application. California students are categorically eligible if they are:

- Living in households receiving certain public benefits: California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), CalFresh, and (as of the 2017-18 school year) Medi-Cal
- Experiencing homelessness
- In foster care

- Migrant
- Runaway
- Enrolled in Head Start

The burden for direct certification falls not on students and families but on schools and districts. Schools can identify their categorically eligible students by exchanging information with the Department of Social Services, their district’s homeless and migrant education coordinators, the California Department of Education’s California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) database, and other government organizations. Categorically eligible households who are not directly certified can still fill out an application but are not required to fill out the income portion. Schools are required to identify students in families participating in CalFresh, but can choose whether or not to identify students that meet the other categorical eligibility requirements.<sup>xv</sup> There is great potential for schools to improve the reach of direct certification by coordinating with the appropriate organizations to make sure all of their categorically eligible students are certified.

## **Provision 2**

Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act allows schools to offer breakfast, lunch, or both at no charge to all students. The provision runs on a four-year cycle, in which the first year schools collect free and reduced price meal applications and determine what percentage of their students have free, reduced price, and paid eligibility status. In that year, schools count only the total number of students eating breakfast and lunch, and determine reimbursement rates by applying the free, reduced price, and paid percentages to that number. In the following three years, schools continue to count only total meals served and use the percentages calculated in the base year. Schools have the option of starting a new four year cycle at any point, if their free and reduced price percentages increase and it is financially advantageous.

Schools using Provision 2 save money because they only have to collect meal applications once every four years, reducing administrative costs by eliminating the need for cashiers and student IDs or pins. The Provision often leads to increases in participation, due shorter lines and the reduced stigma that comes when every student eats for free. The Provision also helps schools reach students whose families are just over the income eligibility limits but still struggle to pay for school meals. In practice the amount schools save varies by district, but as a rule of thumb schools where more than 75 percent of students are free and reduced price eligible are generally able to fully offset the increased costs of offering free breakfast to all students through these savings.<sup>xvi</sup>



Schools with a lower percentage of eligible students also have the option of implementing Provision 2 only for breakfast. With this option schools serve breakfast and calculate reimbursement the same way, but still check each student’s eligibility status for lunch. Therefore, schools implementing Provision 2 for breakfast only must still collect meal applications every year. While this does not reduce cost as much as the full Provision 2, it still encourages more students to eat in the morning. Schools with as low as 60 percent free and reduced price eligible students are usually able to utilize Provision 2 for breakfast without losing money. (See Appendix 3 for Breakfast After the Bell Case Study from Alum Rock Union School District who adopted Provision 2 in 2004.)

**“Parents really like Classroom Breakfast and Second Chance Breakfast because the programs give students a chance to receive a meal if they didn’t eat at home.”**

– **Mary Fell, Director**, Child Nutrition Services, Alum Rock Union School District

## Community Eligibility Provision

Schools with at least 40 percent of students directly certified for free school meals have the option of using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act to offer Universal Free Breakfast. Typically schools with 70 percent or more free and reduced price eligible students will have 40 percent directly certified or “identified” students.<sup>xviii</sup>

Schools using CEP do not use free and reduced price meal applications. Instead, schools are reimbursed at the free rate for a fraction of the total meals served—1.6 times the percentage of identified students (notes this formula is current at the time of writing but subject to change at the federal level). The rest of the meals are reimbursed at the paid rate.

Similar to Provision 2, CEP schools are on a four-year cycle—so if a school has 50 percent identified students and adopts CEP for the 2016-2017 school year, they will be reimbursed for 80 percent of meals served at the free rate, and 20 percent at the paid rate through the 2019-2020 school year. Schools still have option of starting a new cycle at any point if their identified student percentage increases and it is financially advantageous. Reimbursement for CEP is capped at 100 percent of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate, which occurs when a school has 62.5 percent or more identified students. ( $62.5\% \times 1.6 = 100\%$ )

*Example 1: Average daily reimbursement for four schools using the Community Eligibility Provision, assuming 70% average daily breakfast participation and using 2015-16 breakfast reimbursement rates (see Appendices for rates).*

	Population	% of Identified Students	% meals reimbursed at the free rate under CEP	Average Daily Reimbursement
<b>School A</b>	600	30%	0 (does not qualify)	\$0
<b>School B</b>	600	50%	80%	\$769
<b>School C</b>	600	62.5%	100%	\$931
<b>School D</b>	600	90%	100%	\$931

Schools using CEP are required to serve free breakfast and lunch to all students, even if they are not reimbursed for all students at the free rate. However, schools using CEP save money because they no longer have to process free meal applications or check student eligibility status in the cafeteria, and only have to identify categorically eligible students once every four years. Through these savings, many schools are able to benefit financially by using CEP.

If an individual school does not meet the eligibility criteria for CEP, it may still be able to receive CEP benefits by grouping with another school. Under the provision, schools within a district are allowed to group together in whatever combination maximizes the total reimbursement amount.

*Example 2: A school district has two schools, School A and School B. By grouping them together, school A is able to receive the benefits of CEP, which it would not have been able to by itself, and the school district receives \$585 more toward providing free meals.*

	Population	% of Identified Students	% of meals reimbursed at the free rate under CEP	Average Daily Reimbursement
<b>School A</b>	700	30%	N/A (does not qualify)	0
<b>School B</b>	500	65%	88%	\$695
<b>Schools A+B</b>	1200	40%	64%	\$1280

## CEP Changes in California

Currently, about 2,500 schools are eligible for CEP in California and over 1,000 schools have opted into the program. However, many high poverty schools in the state do not qualify for CEP. No school in Santa Clara or San Mateo County is currently using the provision. Recently, the California Department of Education became part of a USDA demonstration project by to use Medi-Cal household income data to directly certify students eligible for free meals, starting statewide in the 2017-18 school year.<sup>xix</sup> It is not known at the time of this report how many schools this will effect, but the

### Comparing Options for Serving Free Breakfast

	Nonpricing	Provision 2	Community Eligibility Provision
<b>Fees Collected from Students?</b>	No	No	No
<b>Counting and Claiming</b>	Schools must keep track of the number of meals served by fee category (free, reduced-price, or paid).	Schools must keep track of only the total number of meals served.	Schools must keep track of only the total number of meals served.
<b>Applications</b>	Schools must continue to collect school meal applications each year.	Schools offering both free breakfast and lunch only collect school meal applications in year one, the "base year," and then do not have to collect applications for at least the next three years.	Schools do not have to collect school meals applications. A school, district, or group of schools must have at least 40 percent "identified students" (i.e., students certified for free meals without an application). <sup>1</sup>
<b>Reimbursement Levels</b>	Schools continue to receive federal reimbursements for the meals served under the three-tiered (free, reduced-price, and paid) system.	Schools are reimbursed based on the ratio of free, reduced-price, and paid meals served in the "base year" when school meal applications are collected.	Schools are reimbursed by multiplying the percentage of "identified students" by 16 to determine the percentage of meals reimbursed at the free rate. The rest of the meals served are reimbursed at the paid rate.
<b>Eligibility</b>	Any school may use nonpricing to serve free meals because meals are still counted and claimed.	Any school may use Provision 2 upon approval by the administering state agency.	Any school, district, or group of schools with 40 percent or more "identified students" may use community eligibility.
<b>Administrative Cost Savings</b>	Staff no longer need to handle payments or track uncollected fees when students can't afford to pay for breakfast.	Schools serving free breakfast and lunch only have to collect school meal applications, at most, once every four years. Less staff is needed in the cafeteria to track who qualifies for free meals or collect meal charges. Counting and claiming are simplified because staff no longer categorize each meal served by fee category.	Staff members no longer collect, certify, or verify applications. Fewer staff is needed in the cafeteria to track who qualifies for free meals or collect meal charges. Counting and claiming are simplified because staff no longer categorize each meal served by fee category.
<b>Optimal Percentage of Free and Reduced-Price Students</b>	Schools with 75 percent free and reduced-price eligible students can generally break even, but schools with eligibility rates as low as 60 percent can operate a free breakfast in the classroom program within budget by taking advantage of economies of scale.	Schools with 75 percent free and reduced-price eligible students can generally break even offering breakfast through Provision 2. Schools offering both breakfast and lunch generally have slightly higher free and reduced-price percentages.	Schools must have at least 40 percent "identified students" to participate in community eligibility, which equates to about 65 percent free and reduced-price eligible students.

Source: Food Research and Action Center

number of eligible schools is expected to grow exponentially; statewide, one-third of children are currently enrolled in Medi-Cal, and that number will likely be higher in schools with high percentages of low-income students.

## **Nonpricing and Elimination of Reduced Price**

Some schools make the decision to implement Universal Free Breakfast without the aid of Provision 2 or the Community Eligibility Provision, and simply pay the difference for the reduced-price and paid meals served themselves. Financially, this is the most viable in schools with lower percentages of free and reduced price students (who would not get large reimbursements from Provision 2 or CEP) but where the majority of students taking breakfast are eligible. Some schools also choose to eliminate the reduced price category, and allow students with family incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line to eat for free. This can increase participation by streamlining a school's breakfast program and reducing barriers to access.

## **School Breakfast Grants**

There are many public and private grants available to districts hoping to expand their school meals programs or pilot Breakfast After the Bell models. Many grants also exist to help schools transition to cooking more, or to offer healthier food. The resources section of this report contains a list of grants that may be applicable to Santa Clara and San Mateo County schools.

## **Engaging Stakeholders**

Whether these models are implemented from the top-down or the bottom-up, nutrition directors and school staff agree that for these programs to run smoothly it is vital that everybody in the school community—principals, teachers, custodial staff, parents, and students—are excited and on board. The best way to ensure this is to engage these stakeholders early, and throughout the planning process. All of these groups may have legitimate concerns or critiques, but when districts listen to and address their concerns, those who initially opposed the changes often become the biggest proponents.

Additionally, when one school in a district starts to serve Universal Free Breakfast or Breakfast After the Bell, other schools are likely to follow. As one nutrition director said, “Principals talk,” and having a successful local example to point to can go a long way in creating enthusiastic buy-in.

	Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)	Grab and Go	Second Chance
Preparation and Service	School nutrition staff packs breakfasts into coolers or insulated bags to be transported to each classroom by school nutrition staff, designated students, or volunteers.	School nutrition staff packs breakfast meals in bags to be picked up from the cafeteria or kiosks in the hallway on the way to class.	Depending on the model used, students can eat in the cafeteria, similar to traditional breakfast, or take a bagged meal to be eaten in between classes or during the next period.
Timing	Students eat during the first 10–15 minutes of class during morning announcements or while the teacher takes attendance or reviews lessons.	Students pick up breakfast meals as they arrive at school and eat on the way to class or at their desks after the bell during the first 10–15 minutes of class.	Students eat after first period, during a morning nutrition break, either in the cafeteria or between classes.
Distribution of Meals	Teachers, school nutrition staff, volunteers, or students distribute meals to students at their desks or before they take their seats, and then record which, or how many, students eat breakfast.	School nutrition staff distributes meals and students are counted via the point of sale (POS) system in the cafeteria, or if using kiosks, through a wireless POS or on manual lists.	School nutrition staff distributes meals and students are counted via the POS system in the cafeteria, or if using kiosks, through a wireless POS or on manual lists.
Clean up	Students clear trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff.	Students clear trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff.	In the cafeteria, clean up is similar to traditional, before-school breakfast service. If serving from kiosks, schools should be sure to provide adequate trash cans in the hallways.
Works Best For...	BIC is ideal for lower-grade levels where children start the day in the same classroom with the same teacher each day, making delivery, counting, and claiming smoother for teachers and school nutrition staff.	“Grab and go” works well for schools that do not have the capacity to deliver food to each classroom or have infrastructure obstacles (e.g., multiple stories) that make delivery impracticable.	Second chance breakfast works particularly well for secondary schools because older students are often not hungry early in the morning and tend to arrive at school closer to the start of the school day.

Source: Food Research and Action Center

# Profiles of Successful Schools and Districts

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For every 100 Redwood City School District students, 56 qualify for free and reduced price meals (FRPM), and the school district has worked hard to make sure these students' breakfast needs are met. Every school serves Second Chance breakfast at recess, and they have also eliminated the reduced price category, serving those students for free too. Five of the district's highest FRPM elementary schools use Provision 2 to serve breakfast and lunch free to all their students.

**Redwood City** started Second Chance 15 years ago. The school board saw that breakfast participation was extremely low and wanted to make increasing participation a priority. Second Chance was first adopted in a single school with a principal who was particularly enthusiastic about the model, but word spread quickly. Within the next couple years, every school in the district was serving breakfast at recess in addition to before the bell. The program also received a lot of support from teachers, who almost immediately saw that their students were coming to school better behaved and more alert. Many in Redwood City see the support and buy-in of their teachers, principals, and school community as the primary reason for the program's success.

The five schools offering universal free meals adopted Provision 2 five years ago. The district's nutrition office knew that they had many students whose families were just over the income limit but could still benefit from free meals. They also recognized that a student is much more likely to eat if their friend is also eligible for free meals. Like when Second Chance was implemented, the Provision 2 schools saw an immediate and dramatic increase in breakfast participation.

Because of their high participation numbers, Redwood City's nutrition department is able to operate most years at a profit. Some of this revenue is used on investments in their meals program, and some it is saved as a safety net for years when participation is lower than expected. If Second Chance service stopped, the Redwood City nutrition department would immediately lose a third of its revenue and would not be able to continue operating its meal program at its current capacity. Because of the financial importance of high participation numbers, it has put a lot of effort into advertising and making sure that all eligible students are signed up for free meals.

Two challenges associated with Second Chance breakfast are the additional labor hours needed for supervision and clean up. Luckily, many staff members were looking for opportunities to work longer hours and were able to fill these jobs without having to hire extra staff. Staff also became very efficient during Second Chance, because they only have 10 minutes each day to get every student through the line.

The nutrition department is constantly working on their menu and asking for input from students, parents, and cafeteria staff, to make sure that they are serving the healthiest and tastiest meals possible. They know that it's important to have meals that are healthy but still appealing. Students are savvy, and if they don't see what they want they will not eat. They are looking into getting Grab and Go carts for some of their schools where the cafeteria is far from the entrance or classrooms. They have also thought about bringing Provision 2 to more schools in the next few years.

**Ravenswood City** schools have been providing Breakfast in the Classroom long enough that most students do not remember a time when they were not eating breakfast at their desks. The district also serves Universal Free Breakfast to all its students. As a result, Ravenswood is one of the few districts Santa Clara or San Mateo Counties where almost all free and reduced price qualifying students eat breakfast and lunch every day.

While Ravenswood schools have some of the strongest breakfast participation in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, its families and residents also experience some of the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity. For much of the second half the 20th century, East Palo Alto was populated mostly by Black residents who migrated there in the 1950s, leaving the oppressive conditions of the American south in search of freedom and economic opportunity. These migrants and their children were instead met



by decades of redlining, school segregation, and economic disinvestment. In recent years, the demographics of the city have changed due to immigration, and today it is also home to Latino and Asian Pacific Islander communities as well. More recently the district has also suffered from sharp decreases in enrollment caused by gentrification from nearby Silicon Valley and Facebook's recent inroads into the city. Still, in 2015-16, 89 percent of Ravenswood students qualified for free or reduced price meals. It was this need that caused leaders in the district to recognize the importance of school meals.

Breakfast in the Classroom began in Ravenswood schools about a decade ago, when the nutrition director brought the idea to the superintendent. The director saw a huge need that was not being met by breakfast before the bell. She also knew the effect that transferring breakfast into the classroom would have on participation. Though she was motivated by the well-being of her students, she gained the enthusiastic support of Ravenswood's superintendent and Chief Business Officer primarily by using a financial justification. Ravenswood's nutrition department had been losing money, and though it took several years she eventually convinced both of them that serving breakfasts in classrooms could increase its revenue. In fall 2009, the superintendent officially mandated Breakfast in the Classroom. To make the change possible, 15 minutes was added to the beginning of the school day. Schools also started serving Universal Free Breakfast that year, made easier because the majority of kids already qualified.

Though the superintendent had the authority to make the change on her own, she believed that the support of school and district staff was vital to the program's long term success. Many teachers were against the change at first, as well as the janitor's union. Both felt that they had not signed up for the new responsibilities that would come with the transition and worried that the extra work would make it more difficult to do their jobs. To address these concerns the superintendent



formed a parent advisory group, which brought together parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff to assist with the implementation and operation of Breakfast in the Classroom. The group also became a place to address the various concerns felt by different stakeholders, and it continues to meet regularly to discuss a wide range of issues facing the district.

Support and engagement from both school staff and parents remains an important part of Ravenswood's breakfast model. Beyond the parent advisory group, members of the nutrition department also attend regular staff meetings, and give presentations explaining the rationale behind doing Breakfast in the Classroom, making sure teachers understand their role and responsibilities in the process. Many parents also volunteer in classrooms, especially in lower grades, staying through breakfast to make sure all the children eat.

The support for Breakfast in the Classroom at Ravenswood remains strong. Parents love that their kids are guaranteed a healthy breakfast. Students have already given the strongest possible endorsement by eating every day. School principals and district leadership are, for the most part, extremely supportive as well. Among teachers and school staff—who bear the most responsibility for running the program day to day—there is some expected variation in opinion, but feelings are generally positive. Unlike most districts however, Ravenswood teacher contracts list running breakfast in their classrooms as a responsibility. Breakfast in the Classroom is so normalized that even teachers who might rather not do it accept that it is their duty, and that the benefit to the students makes the effort worthwhile.

One of the first things that becomes clear when talking to the nutrition staff at **Mountain View-Whisman** school district (MVWSD) is that they believe any child in their district who needs a meal should be able to get one. The second is that—at least for breakfast—they have come close to reaching this goal. All Mountain View-Whisman students have the opportunity to eat Second Chance breakfast between morning class periods and nearly all of the food in the district is cooked from scratch with healthy, local ingredients prioritized.

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and home to Google, Mountain View-Whisman may not fit the classic profile of a high-need school district, but its story is common in the Bay Area. Around 36 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced price meals, putting the district somewhere in the middle on the need spectrum. However, rent costs have forced many low-income families to live two or three to a home, sometimes in garages. Mountain View-Whisman's free and reduced price eligibility numbers have been steadily dropping in the last few years as rising rent costs force low-income families out of the area.

Leadership in the district recognizes that, even though they serve a relatively wealthy base, many of their students still depend on school meals. About a decade ago, the district made the decision to move to Second Chance breakfast. After an aggressive ad campaign targeting students and families failed to increase participation numbers, they realized that to achieve their goal they would need to make a system change. All of MVWSD schools now serve Second Chance breakfast, and the two middle schools have cut out breakfast before the bell entirely.

Breakfast participation increased noticeably after this change, but the nutrition team still felt it could do more. Two years ago, after a decision to prioritize food quality, in part due to feedback from parents, it successfully applied for a grant to transition to scratch cooking. With the grant, as well as a lump sum from the school district, the nutrition office began purchasing the necessary equipment and hiring more staff with culinary backgrounds. The nutrition team had a theory that if the food was good—not just passable, but really tasty—then everybody would want to eat it, erasing the stigma surrounding school meals.

The assumption that more students would choose to eat at school was correct, but to the meals attracted other customers along the way too. Teachers eat school meals, and at the many summer feeding sites they run, parents often eat with their kids. The schools even cater to outside organizations, selling meals, and have considered contracting their services to nearby school districts with less kitchen capacity. For the most part the staff is able to avoid including processed and overly sugary foods in their menus. Every school has a fruit and salad bar, serving everything from watermelon to Swiss chard depending on the day and season. As much as possible, they try to cook with produce grown in school gardens. They also distinguish between food that is “good” and food that is appealing to kids. Two or three days each week are devoted to “stealth food” – classic cafeteria staples made healthy (you might hear the cooks talk about the five pillars of school lunch – hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, chicken fingers, and pizza).

What is happening in Mountain View may seem like a far cry from most districts' nutrition programs. Certainly the initial seed money was important and the outside

catering doesn't hurt, but the people who work there will say that their most important financial tools are a strong business savvy and a thrifty attitude. They craft their menus strategically, utilizing commodity foods from the USDA through the National School Lunch Program and crafting recipes around whatever happens to be fresh and in season that week. As a rule, nothing gets thrown away. The carrot ends and extra spinach leaves leftover from Monday's salad bar will find their way into Wednesday's chili. The nutrition director, who is prone to sayings like "I can feed 500 kids off one bean and make it taste good, too," believes that school cafeterias should learn lessons in frugality and ingenuity from restaurants. Because they have professional cooks in their kitchen, they are able to serve appealing food even under menu constraints.

A program like Mountain View's seems to sell itself, but the district is not taking any chances. The nutrition department focuses on outreach, sending letters home, putting out newspaper ads, attending back to school nights, and reading daily menus over the intercom during the morning announcements. Much of the outreach is focused on making sure eligible students register for free and reduced price meal status. If a child who registered in a previous year is no longer signed up, or if a student is racking up a bill, the team will follow up with the family until it receives an application. Librarians at every school, as well as staff in Mountain View's district offices, are trained to help parents with limited computer access apply online.

While not every student in Mountain View eats school meals, this is largely attributable to the smaller level of need in the area. Because the district has such a large base of high income families, many of these students will bring their meals or eat at home no matter how appealing the school meals. Still, some of Mountain View's schools with the highest FRPM eligibility do come very close to the goals for participation set in this report. While the financial stability of the Mountain View-Whisman district certainly helps, the success of its school meals program is largely due to the skill, passion and commitment of everybody involved.

**Washington Elementary**, which serves K-5 students near downtown San Jose, functions as not just a school, but a community hub. The school keeps its doors open to students and families into the evening and on weekends. During these times, the school is used by a variety of community organizations who provide enrichment activities to students and parents. There is a strong culture of communication between parents and the school. The principal holds two parent meetings each week in addition to making herself available informally. Parents dictate the topics discussed at these meetings, and often bring up nutrition. This culture of communication has translated into robust community involvement and leadership in the school. The photographs of star volunteers—parents who are in the school every week—fill an entire wall of their library.

As a result, breakfast participation is, not surprisingly, high. Between breakfast before the bell and Second Chance breakfast, 70 percent of students eat every day. While the school staggers the morning break and put limits on pizza parties and other sources of competition, it does not have trouble attracting kids to the cafeteria. The vast majority of Washington students qualify for free and reduced price meals, and so it is relatively rare to see a snack or bagged lunch in the building. Because so many students eat their meals at the school, there is little stigma against spending morning recess in the cafeteria. The environment in the school also undoubtedly plays a role. The presence of parents and community organizations creates a robust environment of support. Students know that their social, emotional, and physical health are a priority for the school and community.

Washington Elementary is part of the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD), a large district that serves a 17-mile corridor stretching north-south across the length of the city. SJUSD is also in many ways a model for best practices in school breakfast. Most of its schools serve Second Chance breakfast, and while the elementary schools receive food from a central kitchen, they also have some autonomy to serve a variety of tasty and culturally appropriate menu items that cater to student preferences. Some schools choose to offer fruit and salad bars, while others leave out spice trays for kids looking for a little more flavor. The nutrition services department is constantly working to improve menus, and seeks feedback from students and cafeteria workers at their schools. While most of the food is prepackaged—a necessity for a district as geographically large as SJUSD—it puts effort into making sure ingredients are healthy, organic, and local. At many elementary schools parents are paid to help out in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch.

SJUSD recently identified that its free and reduced price meal programs are under enrolled. Many of their students have undocumented family members, and parents are sometimes nervous about giving out their information to the district. To incentivize filling out applications, the district has begun to pay SAT and AP test fees for all students that apply for free meals, whether or not they are eligible. The district is also working to help some of its schools increase breakfast participation by providing carts and working with principals to change bell schedules.

Due to its size, the district is extremely ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. Washington Elementary serves a dense, small walking community of mostly Latino families. The community is very low income. 90% of students qualify for free and reduced price meals, and a many live multiple families to a single home. Many

members of the Washington community are undocumented, but unlike the district as a whole, Washington does not have a problem with under enrollment. Because of the atmosphere of trust and strong networks of communication between families, parents feel comfortable giving their personal information to the school. This trust between school and community becomes evident after spending only a few minutes on its campus, and illustrates the importance of an involved and supported school community, not just for breakfast participation but for the students as a whole.

**“Breakfast is incredibly important for our students. Many of them do not have access to a complete breakfast at home. We have found that having breakfast available before school as well as Second Chance breakfast available at recess for those who do not come early allows all students to get a complete breakfast each day.”**

**- Stephanie Palmeri Farias:** Principal, Washington Elementary School

# Action Steps

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Transitioning to a Breakfast After the Bell model or offering Universal Free Breakfast can increase meal participation dramatically while making money for school districts. However, these changes take careful planning, and often require champions within the school or community to make the initial push. If you are interested in implementing innovative breakfast models or increasing breakfast participation in your own community, you have the ability to advocate for these changes regardless of your relationship to schools:



## Students

- Eat breakfast in the morning!
- Tell your friends, parents, teachers, and principal about Breakfast After the Bell
- Individually or with a club, make posters or advertisements to put up around the school about the importance of breakfast
- Participate in and ask for taste testing of cafeteria menu items
- Create a petition to bring Breakfast After the Bell, Universal Free Breakfast, or more nutritious food options to your school

## Parents

- Be a vocal supporter of the school breakfast program
- Create a team within your school to advocate for changes to your school's breakfast model
- Volunteer at breakfast or lunch
- Raise awareness:
- Bring discussions about school breakfast to PTA meetings
- Contact your principal, superintendent, or food service director and tell them why breakfast is important to you and why you support these models
- Organize a meeting with other parents and administrators to talk about breakfast
- Share this report
- Join your school's Local Wellness Council

## **Teachers**

- Tell your principal you'd like to do Breakfast After the Bell
- Eat breakfast with your students when possible
- Be a vocal supporter of the school breakfast – organize other teachers and parents
- Create a team within your school to advocate for changes to the school's breakfast model
- Join your school's local Wellness Council

## **Food Service Directors**

- Advocate for Breakfast After the Bell models, Universal Free Breakfast, and healthier food in your school or district
- Be a visible presence in schools promoting breakfast
- Actively promote your breakfast program through outreach and advertising
- Involve parents, teachers, and students in your breakfast program as volunteers or advocates
- Ask for feedback on menu items and other program aspects
- Implement a Breakfast After the Bell model
- Apply for Breakfast After the Bell and nutrition grants (see list in Resources section)

## **Principals and Superintendents**

- Make breakfast a priority: make sure all your schools have a breakfast program
- Be a vocal supporter of school breakfast
- Develop School Wellness Policies that ensure every student gets a nutritious breakfast each morning
- Use breakfast participation as a measure of school success
- Talk to your food service director about the possibility of integrating breakfast into the school day. Ask what you can do to support them in launching a Breakfast After the Bell model, including changing bell schedules to create more time to eat during the day
- Keep students, parents, and teachers informed about meal programs offered in your school or district, and the importance of eating a nutritious breakfast
- Create opportunities for parents and teachers to become more involved with the breakfast program by having them volunteer or eat with students
- Actively solicit feedback about the breakfast program on individual and institutional levels
- Offer resources and administrative support to teachers or community members who approach you about increasing breakfast participation or doing Breakfast After the Bell
- Run outreach campaigns to sign up eligible families for free and reduced price meals
- Organize a breakfast competition within or between schools with the goal of increasing breakfast participation

## Policy Makers

- Make school meals a priority in your district
- Invest in Breakfast After the Bell and learn best practices from other states
- Visit a school that has a Breakfast After the Bell program
- Focus on implementing Breakfast After the Bell and Universal Free Breakfast models in high need schools
- Allow time spent during Breakfast in the Classroom to count as instructional time
- Add a 10 or 15 minute break into the morning schedule to allow for Second Chance breakfast

## Business Community

- Give schools grants for personnel, equipment, healthier food, increased kitchen capability, advertising/branding, etc.
- Search for schools and districts that are interested in increasing breakfast participation, and ask how best to assist them
- Run a breakfast contest for a school or district and buy prizes for increases in participation
- For organizations with name recognition, allow your brand to be used to promote school breakfast programs

## Non Profits & Advocacy Organizations

- Advocate on behalf of school breakfast
- Educate districts, legislators, and others about the effectiveness of Breakfast After the Bell and Universal Free Breakfast
- Partner with other organizations to connect all available nutrition programs for low-income families

## Public Agencies

- Explore expanded sharing of information with non-profits or between schools, health systems, and other systems of support for children and their families
- Participate in coalitions addressing nutrition services for children

**“School breakfast is a critical piece of the safety net for low-income families, and partnerships are key to expanding the reach of the program. Public/private partnerships to provide funding for start-up costs to implement Breakfast After the Bell helps schools leverage state and federal resources to support the program.”**

**- Jessie Hewins:** Senior Child Nutrition Policy Analyst, Food Resource and Action Center

# Resources

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## Grants

### Fuel Up To Play 60:

<https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/>

**Grant name:** Fuel Up To Play 60

**Amount:** Up to \$300 to \$4000 per school

**Deadline:** November

**Description:** Funds for Breakfast After the Bell, healthy foods, farm to school, and other health and physical activity initiatives.



**Action for Healthy Kids:** <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/apply-for-grants>

**Grant name:** School Breakfast Grants

**Amount:** \$500 to \$5000 per school

**Deadline:** Fall

**Description:** Supports increased breakfast participation by piloting Breakfast After the Bell programs or Universal Free Breakfast.

### Game On Grants

**Grant name:** Game On Grants

**Amount:** \$500 to \$2500 per school

**Deadline:** Fall

**Description:** Supports physical activity and nutrition initiatives.

**Chef Ann:** <http://www.chefannfoundation.org/get-involved/our-grants>

**Grant name:** Project Produce

**Amount:** \$2500 per school

**Deadline:** No deadline; grants awarded on ongoing basis

**Description:** Supports increased consumption of fresh produce through lunchroom education activities.

## Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools

**Grant name:** Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools

**Amount:** \$2955 per school

**Deadline:** No deadline; grants awarded on ongoing basis

**Description:** Help districts implement salad bars as part of their daily meal programs.

## School Food Support Initiative

**Grant name:** School Food Support Initiative

**Amount:** Program services valued at about \$192,000 per district

**Deadline:** November

**Description:** Help districts realize their healthy change goals through food service director workshops, on-site assessment and strategic planning, peer to peer collaboration, and the opportunity to apply for a one-time \$50,000 equipment grant.

**USDA:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

**Grant Name:** Farm to School

**Amount:** \$20,000 to \$10,000 depending on the grant.

**Deadline:** December

**Description:** A USDA grant that provides funds to help schools implement farm to school programs. There are four different farm to school grants: Support Service, Implementation, Planning, and Training.

The California Department of Education and USDA also administer a number of grants aimed at helping schools and districts provide healthier food options and increase participation in their meal programs. Information about these grants can be found at these locations:

**CDE:** <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/rs/index.asp>

**USDA:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/grant-opportunities/school-meals>

# Other Resources

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These organizations are committed to helping school serve healthier meals and reach more kids, and have a variety of resources on their websites to assist schools in this goal:

## **No Kid Hungry** – <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast>

- \* Reports and case studies about school breakfast
- \* Toolkits and guides for parents and other stakeholders
- \* Media and community engagement
- \* PSAs and videos
- \* State school breakfast legislation and policy information
- \* Information and resources around the Community Eligibility Provision
- \* Interactive school breakfast finance calculator

## **Food Resource and Action Center** – <http://frac.org/programs/school-breakfast-program>

- \* Research and Infographics
- \* Guide to school meal eligibility and reimbursement rates
- \* Case studies of successful Breakfast After the Bell initiatives
- \* School finance calculators
- \* Guide for qualifying students for free and reduced price meals

## **California Food Policy Advocates** – <http://cfpa.net/school-breakfast> and <http://cfpa.net/school-meal-enrollment>

- \* Research, case studies, and infographics
- \* Breakfast expansion and grant resources
- \* School breakfast news
- \* Legislation and policy updates

**California Department of Education - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/sbp.asp>**

- \* Program information and requirements
- \* Resources for increasing breakfast participation
- \* Free technical assistance and guidance
- \* Eligibility and grant information

**USDA Food and Nutrition Service - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program-sbp>**

- \* Application and eligibility information
- \* Community Eligibility Provision resources
- \* Grant information
- \* Legislation and policy updates
- \* Research and reports
- \* Tools for schools
- \* Breakfast marketing ideas (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/marketing-ideas>)

**Second Harvest Food Bank - <http://www.shfb.org/>**

Second Harvest hopes to be a resource for anybody in our community trying to increase breakfast participation in schools. We can help with grant-writing, provide equipment, education, and advertising/branding for schools and districts, and are willing to assist in any other way that we can be useful. Interested stakeholders should contact Cindy McCown, Vice President of Community Engagement and Policy, at [cmccown@shfb.org](mailto:cmccown@shfb.org).

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Finally, I would like to thank Congressional Hunger Center the staff, and particularly Jon Wogman, for supporting me throughout my placement with Second Harvest, and for helping me to grow and reflect critically on my experiences at Second Harvest and the broader anti-hunger movement.

# Appendix 1:

## Technical Notes & Methodology

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### Information used:

- \* Data requested from CA Department of Education about total meals served by school district broken down by free/reduced/paid category 2015-16
- \* Data from CA Department of Education website on free, reduced-price, and total school populations 2015-16
- \* Information from CDE website about 2015-16 national and state breakfast reimbursement amounts
- \* Calendar information from individual school districts
- \* National average breakfast plate cost for elementary, middle, and high schools from the School Nutrition Association

### Calculations

The formulas for calculating current breakfast reimbursement numbers, the lost dollars, and the potential additional revenue for an individual district are shown below. The Current Breakfast Reimbursement rate calculates the total reimbursement from free, reduced, and paid meals, while the Additional Breakfast Reimbursement calculations are done assuming that schools increase free and reduced meal participation, without taking paid meals into consideration.

### Key:

ABR = Total Additional Breakfast Revenue by getting FRPM participation up to 70%

ADB = Average Daily Breakfast Participation

ADL = Average Daily Lunch Participation

BPC = breakfast plate cost, depends on whether the district is an elementary, middle, or high school district (if it is a mix, then the BPC is a weighted average)

BRR = California Breakfast Reimbursement Rate (federal plus state reimbursement)

CBR = Total Current Breakfast Reimbursement

LD = Lost Dollars, the total additional breakfast reimbursement schools could get by bringing FRPM participation up to 100 percent its lunch participation

LM = Lost Meals

**Current Breakfast Reimbursement for an individual district:**

$$CBR=(ADB_{free} *BRR_{free} +ADB_{rdcd} *BRR_{reduced} +ADB_{paid} *BRR_{paid} )*\# \text{ school days}$$

**Additional Breakfast Reimbursement for an individual district:**

$$LD= (ADL_{free} *BRR_{free} +ADL_{rdcd} *BRR_{reduced} )*\# \text{ school days}$$

(If a district’s breakfast participation is greater than its lunch participation, LD = 0)

**Additional Meals Served for an individual district:**

$$LM=((ADL_{free} +ADL_{rdcd})-(ADB_{free} +) ADB_{rdcd}))*\# \text{ school days}$$

**Additional Revenue Formula for an individual district:**

$$ABR=LD-(BPC*LM)$$

(If a district’s breakfast participation is greater than its lunch participation, ABR = 0)

*2015-16 federal breakfast reimbursement rates*

	<b>Free</b>	<b>Reduced price</b>	<b>Paid</b>
Basic Breakfast - Site served < 40% free and reduced price lunches in 2013-14	\$1.66	\$1.36	\$0.29
Severe Need Breakfast - Site served > 40% free and reduced price lunches in 2013-14*	\$1.99	\$1.69	\$0.29

\*Neediness is an approximation, because I used 2015-16 meals instead of 2013-14 (though FRPM numbers have decreased across the board since then), and because I did it for the district rather than the school

*2015-16 state meal reimbursement rates*

Free	Reduced price
\$0.2271	\$0.2271

## Appendix 2: Lost Dollars Table

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These charts show by school district the total reimbursement received and the approximately how much additional reimbursement could have been received if schools in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches. School districts with no breakfast programs, or who did not report participation numbers to the California Department of Education, are not shown. Districts where less than 30% of students qualify for free and reduced price meals are shown in blue. Districts with no dollar amount in the “Lost FRPM Dollars” column either reached or exceeded the goal of one breakfast per lunch served.

### Chart Key:

**FRPM eligible:** The percentage of students certified for free or reduced price meals in the 2015-16 school year

**FRPM breakfast served:** On an average 2015-16 day, the percentage of FRPM certified students who took a school breakfast

**Total Reimbursement:** The total federal and state reimbursement received in the 2015-16 school year for school breakfasts

**Lost FRPM Dollars:** The additional reimbursement districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches (approximately 70% participation)

**Lost Meals:** The additional meals districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches

**FRPM Breakfast over Lunch:** Breakfast participation as a percentage of lunch participation in 2015-16

**Lost Dollars: Santa Clara County**

	FRPM eligible	FRPM Breakfast Served	Total Reimbursement	Lost FRPM Dollars	Lost Meals	FRPM Breakfast / Lunch
ACE Charter Schools	93%	32%	\$ 61,753	\$ 45,359	20,837	57%
Alpha Public Schools	95%	14%	\$ 44,173	\$ 175,841	80,511	20%
Alum Rock Union ESD	86%	45%	\$ 1,692,716	\$ 1,268,229	586,467	56%
Berryessa Union ESD	34%	14%	\$ 131,914	\$ 475,623	222,862	20%
Cambrian SD	15%	30%	\$ 50,495	\$ 54,603	30,321	45%
Campbell Union HSD	20%	20%	\$ 110,208	\$ 115,223	53,386	48%
Campbell Union SD	43%	16%	\$ 193,422	\$ 619,330	286,535	23%
Cupertino Union SD	4%	18%	\$ 46,465	\$ 103,456	56,743	29%
East Side Union HSD	50%	31%	\$ 1,401,716	\$ 566,914	264,035	71%
Evergreen ESD	31%	19%	\$ 272,159	\$ 684,549	318,307	28%
Franklin-McKinley ESD	80%	43%	\$ 964,575	\$1,166,740	539,075	45%
Fremont Union HSD	13%	40%	\$ 211,840	\$ 37,552	17,808	84%
Gilroy USD	57%	41%	\$ 1,009,402	\$ 709,419	326,905	58%
Luther Burbank SD	91%	96%	\$ 161,787	-	0	101%
Milpitas USD	32%	33%	\$ 416,988	\$ 446,384	209,164	46%
Moreland SD	28%	51%	\$ 258,904	\$ 114,098	53,319	68%
Morgan Hill USD	41%	45%	\$ 573,450	\$ 148,634	68,900	79%
Mount Pleasant ESD	81%	43%	\$ 310,611	\$ 179,096	83,168	63%
Mountain View -Whisman SD	36%	56%	\$ 348,634	\$ 147,121	68,258	70%
Mountain View-Los Altos Union HSD	16%	37%	\$ 86,184	\$ 24,433	11,380	77%
Oak Grove ESD	44%	34%	\$ 582,090	\$ 637,141	295,309	47%
Orchard ESD	52%	36%	\$ 61,915	\$ 49,669	23,424	54%
Palo Alto USD	8%	22%	\$ 75,056	\$ 119,468	65,648	36%
Rocketship Education	86%	88%	\$ 1,463,688	-	0	122%
San Jose USD	44%	37%	\$ 1,925,522	\$ 1,623,516	750,055	54%
Santa Clara USD	40%	29%	\$ 643,760	\$ 865,418	402,932	42%
Saratoga Union ESD	1%	15%	\$ 4,038	\$ 2,818	1,527	22%
Sunnyvale SD	37%	36%	\$ 326,627	\$ 289,333	134,728	52%
Union ESD	10%	24%	\$ 46,785	\$ 68,801	37,788	39%
County Total	37%	37%	\$ 13,487,613	\$ 10,752,420	5,017,428	55%

**Chart Key:**

**FRPM eligible:** The percentage of students certified for free or reduced price meals in the 2015-16 school year

**FRPM breakfast served:** On an average 2015-16 day, the percentage of FRPM certified students who took a school breakfast

**Total Reimbursement:** The total federal and state reimbursement received in the 2015-16 school year for school breakfasts

**Lost FRPM Dollars:** The additional reimbursement districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches (approximately 70% participation)

**Lost Meals:** The additional meals districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches

**FRPM Breakfast over Lunch:** Breakfast participation as a percentage of lunch participation in 2015-16

Lost Dollars: San Mateo County						
	FRPM eligible	FRPM Breakfast Served	Total Reimbursement	Lost FRPM Dollars	Lost Meals	FRPM Breakfast / Lunch
Bayshore ESD	72%	32%	\$ 32,372	\$ 40,121	18,439	44%
Belmont-Redwood Shores ESD	6%	0%	-	\$ 62,916	34,363	0%
Burlingame ESD	9%	0%	-	\$ 68,352	37,435	0%
Cabrillo USD	42%	34%	\$ 176,780	\$ 61,010	28,459	74%
Jefferson ESD	59%	15%	\$ 204,743	\$ 690,775	325,010	22%
Jefferson USD	39%	28%	\$ 187,429	\$ 75,350	35,629	70%
La Honda-Pescadero USD	51%	46%	\$ 27,937	\$ 16,270	7,605	62%
Menlo Park City ESD	6%	0%	-	\$ 44,631	24,832	0%
Millbrae ESD	18%	41%	\$ 73,807	\$ 48,916	22,962	57%
Pacifica / Brisbane SD	20%	13%	\$ 38,180	\$ 143,026	66,976	20%
Portola Valley ESD	7%	0%	-	\$ 12,370	6,950	0%
Ravenswood City ESD	89%	69%	\$ 797,400	\$ 57,629	26,102	93%
Redwood City ESD	56%	56%	\$ 1,040,808	\$ 478,311	221,304	68%
San Bruno Park ESD	38%	30%	\$ 116,719	\$ 154,280	72,219	42%
San Carlos ESD	6%	0%	-	\$ 41,237	22,620	0%
San Mateo Union HSD	17%	38%	\$ 207,157	\$ 76,082	35,809	72%
San Mateo-Foster City SD	26%	27%	\$ 315,246	\$ 336,245	154,561	47%
Sequoia Union HSD	34%	38%	\$ 433,519	\$ 192,447	89,506	69%
South San Francisco USD	39%	16%	\$ 210,636	\$ 565,634	261,278	27%
Summit Public Schools	49%	23%	\$ 96,654	\$ 35,097	16,595	72%
Woodside ESD	10%	0%	-	\$ 13,492	6,372	0%
County Total	33%	34%	\$ 3,959,386	\$ 3,214,190	1,515,026	54%
Two County Total	36%	37%	\$ 17,447,000	\$ 13,966,610	6,532,454	55%

**Chart Key:**

**FRPM eligible:** The percentage of students certified for free or reduced price meals in the 2015-16 school year

**FRPM breakfast served:** On an average 2015-16 day, the percentage of FRPM certified students who took a school breakfast

**Total Reimbursement:** The total federal and state reimbursement received in the 2015-16 school year for school breakfasts

**Lost FRPM Dollars:** The additional reimbursement districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches (approximately 70% participation)

**Lost Meals:** The additional meals districts would have received in 2015-16 if they had served the same number of breakfasts as lunches

**FRPM Breakfast over Lunch:** Breakfast participation as a percentage of lunch participation in 2015-16

# BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



## Case Study

**2015-16 ALUM ROCK UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT (ARUSD):** Mary Fell, *Director, Child Nutrition Services*



### DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

**23** K-8 Traditional Public Schools<sup>1</sup>  
14 K-5 elementary schools  
2 K-8 elementary/middle schools  
7 6-8 middle schools

**9,330** Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals<sup>2</sup>

**10,896** Students Enrolled<sup>3</sup>

### FOOD QUALITY

Classroom Breakfast features both hot and cold entrees, including waffles, pancakes, and breakfast burritos.

At Second Chance Breakfast, schools offer cold cereal and milk as the entree.

The ARUSD Child Nutrition Services department uses the USDA Foods Program for about half of the ingredients in its breakfast items.

### BREAKFAST MODELS



**Prior to Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) service models:** ARUSD schools served traditional before-the-bell breakfast in the school cafeteria.

**15 years ago (2001):** ARUSD began serving Second Chance Breakfast at 5 middle schools.

**12 years ago (2004):** Five elementary schools began serving Classroom Breakfast.

**“Parents really like Classroom Breakfast and Second Chance Breakfast because the programs give students a chance to receive a meal if they didn't eat at home.”**

– Mary Fell, *Director, Child Nutrition Services*

### BEHAVIORAL & ACADEMIC IMPACTS

- ➔ Teachers report fewer disruptions in class due to student complaints about being hungry before lunch.
- ➔ School Health Aides report fewer student complaints about headaches and stomachaches.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Strategy

ARUSD began offering Second Chance breakfast at five middle schools in 2001, in response to Health Aides' reporting a high number of students complaining about hunger in the mid-morning hours. In 2004, the district adopted Provision 2<sup>4</sup> and implemented BAB at five elementary schools whose principals were interested in offering Classroom Breakfast or Second Chance Breakfast.

#### Hurdles

There was initial resistance from some custodians and teachers. These stakeholders had concerns about attracting pests, creating mess, and increasing workloads. There were also concerns that if Second Chance Breakfast was offered too close to lunch time, kids would be full and skip lunch.

#### Solutions

- + Second Chance Breakfast is timed to allow a substantial break before lunch service.
- + Health Aides had identified classrooms where teachers were reporting disruptions in class due to students complaints of hunger. Focusing implementation efforts on those classrooms helped win over principals and in turn overcome the initial objections from some teachers and custodial staff who didn't immediately recognize the benefits to students.



## PROGRAM FINANCES

- BAB start-up costs were covered by the district's cafeteria fund.
- Start-up costs included spending for additional refrigeration, transport bags, and additional labor.
- The revenue from increased breakfast participation (meal reimbursements) has more than covered additional costs of operating BAB models. It also helps offset lower district-wide school nutrition revenue due to declining enrollment.

**“Breakfast After the Bell is great for the students. They get time to play before class and are in the classroom on time.”**

– Mary Fell, Director, Child Nutrition Services

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

### Before BAB implementation

Participation among all students averaged about 25% at schools offering traditional before the bell breakfast.

### After BAB implementation

- ➔ Participation at schools serving Second Chance Breakfast is 35%-40%.
- ➔ Participation at schools serving Classroom Breakfast has increased to about 75%.

## PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

- Parents and students have been supportive of BAB.
- Some teachers and custodial staff have been slower to express support for BAB. Positive input from principals was key to winning over those who initially expressed some opposition to the change.
- Child Nutrition Services staff enthusiastically support BAB and would like to see it expanded to more schools.

## NOTES & REFERENCES

CFPA thanks Mary Fell for her time and insights into the school breakfast programs at Alum Rock Union School District.

<sup>1</sup>Traditional, non-charter K-12 schools that were active in the 2014-15 school year. This excludes sites such as continuation schools, virtual schools, and independent study schools. Source: California Department of Education (CDE) School Directory at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/>

<sup>2-3</sup>Students certified as eligible for free and reduced-price meals in traditional, non-charter K-12 schools during the 2014-15 school year. Source: CFPA analysis of the FRPM student poverty data file available from CDE at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filessp.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Provision 2 is a federally authorized option used in high-poverty schools to serve universally free meals. [http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/ChildNutrition\\_Legislation/LCFF-Provision2-Factsheet-2014.pdf](http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/ChildNutrition_Legislation/LCFF-Provision2-Factsheet-2014.pdf)

# Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup>California Department of Education, Student Poverty FRPM Data. December 2016. <http://www.cde.ca.gov>

<sup>ii</sup>California Food Policy Advocates, Nutrition & Food Insecurity Profile. July 2016. <http://cfpa.net>

<sup>iii</sup>California Housing Partnership Corporation, The Critical Role of Housing Access and Affordability in Reducing Poverty. April 2015. <http://chpc.net>

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<sup>xiii</sup>USD Food and Nutrition Service, School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study. April 2008. <https://www.fns.usda.gov>

<sup>xiv</sup>Food Research and Action Center, Facts: Offering Free Breakfast to All Students. <http://frac.org>

<sup>xv</sup>USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Eligibility Manual for School Meals: Determining and Verifying Eligibility; School Year 2016-2017. July 2016. <https://www.fns.usda.gov>

<sup>xvi</sup>Food Research and Action Center, Facts: Offering Free Breakfast to All Students. <http://frac.org>

<sup>xvii</sup>Food Research and Action Center, How it Works: Provision 2. November 2016. <http://frac.org>

<sup>xviii</sup>Food Research and Action Center, The Community Eligibility Provision: What Food Service Management Companies Need to Know. April 2015. <http://www.frac.org>

<sup>xix</sup>California Food Policy Advocates, Medicaid Direct Certification to Go Statewide! September 2016. <http://cfpa.net>