



# School Breakfast

## Key to Academic Excellence

**All children need breakfast every day**  
**Bottom Line: It takes more than books for a child to learn**

Every student needs to eat breakfast because a hungry child cannot learn. Yet many children come to school without eating breakfast. Children may not eat breakfast because they do not have time or are not hungry when they wake up. With busy family schedules, many children are left to prepare breakfast on their own. Those who do eat may choose low-nutrient foods that do not sustain energy levels throughout the morning. For some children, food insufficiency may be an issue. Others eat breakfast so early they are hungry again when they get to school. Whatever the reason, the School Breakfast Program can help. Many core subjects are taught in the morning, so make sure school breakfast fuels your child with the energy needed to perform better in school.

*“Numerous studies, reviews and position papers ... have found that increased participation in School Breakfast Programs is associated with better academic test scores, daily attendance and class participation, and it also has been linked to reductions in absences and tardiness.”*

— David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., 16th United States Surgeon General, Director, Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine, Testimony on Child Nutrition Reauthorization to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, May 16, 2009

### **Benefits of School Breakfast**

**Children** benefit because they:

- have higher test scores, work faster, make fewer errors and are more creative
- are less likely to be sent to the principal or visit the school nurse
- are better able to concentrate on learning
- are more cooperative and get along better with classmates
- are healthier and have improved attendance

**Parents** benefit because:

- mornings are easier
- children start the day ready to learn
- concerns about skipping breakfast are relieved

**Teachers** benefit because:

- behavior improves
- academic success improves
- attention increases

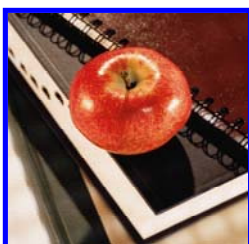
**Principals/Superintendents** benefit because:

- attendance increases
- test scores increase
- discipline problems decrease



*90 percent of Connecticut teachers surveyed indicate that the School Breakfast Program is a positive influence on the school day.*

— *Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program, End Hunger CT!, 2003*



### **School Breakfast: A Smart Choice for Busy Parents**

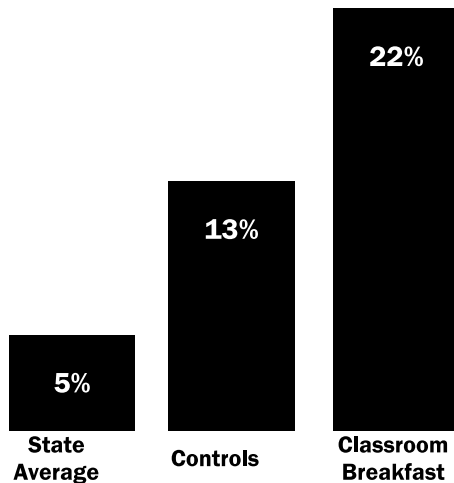
In many classrooms, demanding school subjects like math and science are taught in the morning. When children eat breakfast at school, they start the day fueled to learn so they can do their best on their hardest work. School breakfasts are planned to meet one-fourth of children's daily nutrient needs, so they also help sustain students' energy throughout the morning.

## School Breakfast Programs Boost Brain Power

### Two case studies in action:

- School breakfast participation is directly correlated with higher standardized test scores among elementary school students. The Center for Social Policy at the University of Massachusetts in Boston conducted a study that found a participation rate of 80 to 100 percent in the School Breakfast Program resulted in higher English and math test scores than participation at lower levels. The results confirm previous research showing that school breakfast participation can lead to better grades.
- Maryland's Meals for Achievement breakfast pilot program offers classroom breakfast to all students. The program found tardiness declined by 8 percent, suspensions decreased by 1.6 days per month, standardized test scores increased 17 percent over the state average and behavior improved.

### Percentage Improvement in MSPAP\* "Satisfactory" Rating



\* Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, 2001



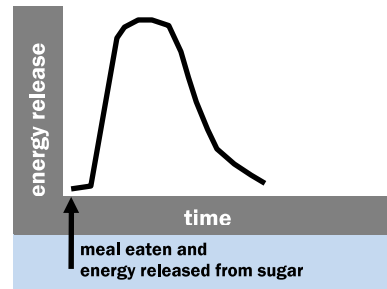
Adapted with permission  
from Western Dairy Association.

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons and does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. Inquiries regarding the Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Manager, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457, 860-807-2101.

## Wise Food Choices Enhance Learning

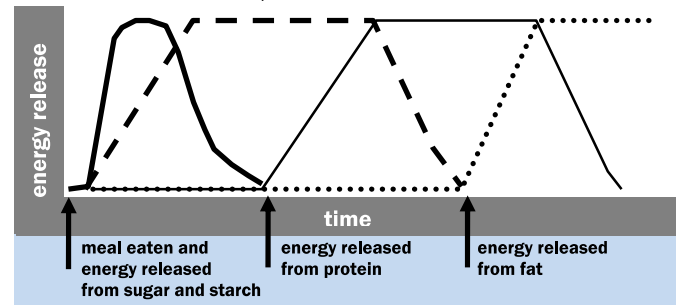
### Comparison of energy available for learning from two different breakfasts

#### Breakfast 1: Sweetened Fruit Drink or Soda, Fruit-Filled Toaster Pastry



Sugary foods, such as fruit, fruit juice or fruit drinks, candy or soda, eaten in place of a meal cause a quick rise in blood sugar and energy in children. About an hour later, blood sugar and energy decline rapidly, bringing on hunger symptoms.

#### Breakfast 2: Orange Juice, Toast or Cereal, Nonfat or 1% Milk



A typical school breakfast includes at least three food groups from MyPyramid (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>), such as fruit or juice, bread or cereal and milk. These foods contain sugar, starch, protein and fat that digest at different rates and keep blood sugar up so energy levels are sustained throughout the morning.

## A Breakfast Success Story

Northend Elementary School, New Britain, CT: Food service director Mike Koch received a grant from the New England Dairy & Food Council to implement a universal classroom breakfast program during the 2006-07 school year. Breakfast participation increased from 42 to 72 percent. The program was so successful the district continued it after the grant ended.

### References

- *Breakfast Key to Excellence*, Western Dairy Association, 2009.
- *Maryland Meals for Achievement Classroom Breakfast Pilot Program*, Maryland State Department of Education, 2001.
- *School Breakfast Pre-Study*, Center for Social Policy, UMass Boston, Report to Project Bread, 2005. [http://www.projectbread.org/site/PageServer?pagename=end\\_mcas](http://www.projectbread.org/site/PageServer?pagename=end_mcas)
- *Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program*, End Hunger CT!, 2003. <http://www.endhungerct.org/Teachers%20Perceptions%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

For additional information on the School Breakfast Program, contact Jackie Schipke at the Connecticut State Department of Education at 860-807-2123 or [jackie.schipke@ct.gov](mailto:jackie.schipke@ct.gov).