

Annual report charts Oregon's participation in school breakfast program

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon " During the 2006-2007 school year, 104,156 low-income Oregon students participated in the national School Breakfast Program, according to the School Breakfast Scorecard 2007. This was a slight increase over the prior year. The 2007 Scorecard was released this week and is issued annually by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) to measure national and state trends in school breakfast.

"Breakfast provides an important nutritional boost for children, but can be particularly critical for children living in families with few resources," said Patti Whitney-Wise, executive director of the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. "These families often cannot afford enough nutritious food for everyone in their household so they rely on school meals to make sure their children get enough to eat."

Numerous studies have demonstrated the link between breakfast and learning: Breakfast improves nutrition, prevents obesity, improves academic achievement, and reduces discipline problems in school. But, many families find it hard to provide a healthy and filling morning meal for their children, especially as they struggle with low wages, morning commutes and work schedules. As a result, many children miss out on breakfast. The School Breakfast Program can help fill this gap.

"We need to reach more children with school breakfast. It's a fast and long-lasting way to improve children's learning and behavior, foster healthy eating habits, and reduce hunger," said Jim Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). "Many states and schools recognize the profound benefits

of making sure all children have a healthy breakfast to start their day. When schools take their breakfast programs a step further by making it part of the school day with breakfast in the classroom or “grab-and-go” carts in the hallway, we see more children participate in the program.

For every 100 low-income children who participated in Oregon’s School Lunch Program a little over half, 55.9 percent, also received free and reduced-price breakfasts. FRAC has set a national goal of increasing participation to 60%. If Oregon schools served breakfasts to 60 out of 100, that would help 7,656 more low-income children and gain an additional \$1,639,237 in federal funding for our state. New Mexico, the highest ranked state in the Scorecard, served breakfast to 61 children for every 100 who received lunch.

“If we set our sights even higher we can serve more Oregon children by eliminating the “reduced priced” category or better yet by providing breakfast to all children at no charge” said Whitney-Wise. “With links this strong between nutrition and learning it makes good sense to make it easy for children to get proper nutrition so they can be at their best in the classroom. Teachers know the benefits of breakfast, too. They see the difference when children are hungry or malnourished because it shows up through poor academic performance and increased behavioral problems.”

About the report:

The full report, School Breakfast Scorecard 2007, is available online in pdf format. To measure the reach of the School Breakfast Program, FRAC compares the number of schools and low-income children who participate in breakfast to those that participate in the National School Lunch Program.

Oregon's School Breakfast Program is run by the Oregon Dept. of Education, Child Nutrition Programs.

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