

BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



Case Study

2015-16 FORT BRAGG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (FBUSD): Pilar Gray, Nutrition Services Director



DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

4 PK-12 Traditional Public Schools¹

1 PK-2 elementary school

1 3-5 elementary school

1 6-8 middle school

1 9-12 high school

1,163 Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals²

1,764 Students Enrolled³

FOOD QUALITY

FBUSD is a small district that emphasizes scratch cooking whenever possible. Breakfast sandwiches, muffins, and bagels are all made from scratch and with little or no added sugar. The district operates a very successful Farm to School program and sources much of its produce from local farms.

The FBUSD Nutrition Services department uses the USDA Foods Program for baking ingredients and proteins in its breakfast items.

BREAKFAST MODELS



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

14 years ago (2002): FBUSD added Breakfast After the Bell service during mid-morning break at Fort Bragg Middle and High schools.

“When kids are hungry they can’t focus. We need them ready to learn, not thinking about how long it is until lunch”

– Pilar Gray, Nutrition Services Director

BEHAVIORAL & ACADEMIC IMPACTS

- ➔ At the elementary schools without BAB, teachers often buy snacks and sandwiches for students to keep them from being hungry and distracted in class.
- ➔ Teachers and principals have observed fewer class disruptions at the middle and high school during morning periods.

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy

FBUSD began offering Second Chance Breakfast out of the school cafeteria at its middle and high school in 2002. The Second Chance model was easier to implement than Classroom Breakfast since the point of service wouldn't change from the cafeteria.

Hurdles

The increased volume of service was initially a challenge for Nutrition Services staff. BAB service is timed during mid-morning break and participation soon increased to be the busiest serving time for any school meal served — even more popular than lunch service.

Solutions

➔ Nutrition Services staff improved efficiency by adding a second service line during Second Chance Breakfast and completing as much prep work as possible the day before. Now service is quicker and goes smoothly every morning.

➔ Teachers at Fort Bragg Middle and High schools are very supportive of the BAB program since they want to see their students well fed, less distracted, and ready to learn. Teachers make sure that classes scheduled before mid-morning break are adjourned on time so that students have time to take advantage of Second Chance breakfast.



PROGRAM FINANCES

- Since service is held at the cafeteria, BAB start-up costs were low and covered by the district's cafeteria fund.
- The revenue from increased breakfast participation (meal reimbursements) at BAB schools has helped to cover the additional cost of higher quality ingredients and equipment upgrades, allowing the district to continue and even expand its commitment to scratch cooking.
- FBUSD absorbs the student-share cost of all reduced-price meals (\$0.40 each) to simplify service for students and administrators. Those costs are partially offset by the increased breakfast participation at BAB schools.

“I was a teacher before this job, and I've seen firsthand how food affects students in the classroom for better and worse. Good food equals a good education.”

– Pilar Gray, Nutrition Services Director

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

At Schools Serving Only Traditional, Before-the-Bell Breakfast

Participation among all students averaged from 20% to 26% at schools offering traditional before the bell breakfast.

At Schools Serving After-the-Bell Breakfast

- ➔ Participation among all students averaged from 30% to 43% at schools serving Second Chance Breakfast.

PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

- The broader community is very supportive of the Nutrition Services programs and its commitment to high quality meals.
- Despite tightening school district budgets, parents and other stakeholders consistently defend the school nutrition programs against any funding cuts
- Nutrition Services staff enthusiastically support BAB and would like to see it expanded to the district's two elementary schools.

NOTES & REFERENCES

CFPA thanks Pilar Gray for her time and insights into the school breakfast programs at Fort Bragg Unified School District.

¹Traditional, non-charter K-12 schools that were active in the 2015-16 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/>

²⁻³Students 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>