Evaluating School Breakfast and Implementing Second Chance Breakfast in Newark Unified School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), with grant support from Kaiser Permanente and All Stars Helping Kids, evaluated two breakfast programs in the Newark Unified School District (NUSD): conventional school breakfast and Second Chance Breakfast. From June 2008 through December 2008, CFPA also followed the implementation of a Second Chance Breakfast program at one NUSD campus, Lincoln Elementary School.

Included in the full report are findings from the examination of NUSD's breakfast programs, policy recommendations to improve school breakfast, and best practices for Second Chance Breakfast programs.

Key Findings

Breakfast participation nearly doubled in 2006-07 when Second Chance Breakfast was implemented at nine of ten mainstream schools throughout NUSD. That same year, school lunch participation increased to almost 50% of NUSD students, showing that districts can successfully operate concurrent Second Chance Breakfast and school lunch programs.

Second Chance Breakfast positively impacted the fiscal status of NUSD's Child Nutrition Services Department (CNS) by increasing revenue through increased school meal participation. In 2007-08, the year following widespread Second Chance Breakfast implementation, revenue for NUSD-CNS increased by more than $260,000. Implementing Second Chance Breakfast was also fiscally beneficial because it allowed more cost-effective use of labor within NUSD-CNS.

Common concerns about operating Second Chance Breakfast include increased maintenance duties, increased child supervision duties, and fiscal feasibility. For NUSD, these issues proved much less prohibitive than stakeholders initially anticipated. The operational and administrative concerns that did arise from Second Chance Breakfast were successfully managed by NUSD personnel.

Policy Recommendations

Federal and State Policy Recommendations

1. Congress should increase school breakfast reimbursement rates contingent upon USDA's swift adaption of school nutrition standards to reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. USDA should promptly revise the standards upon any updates of the Dietary Guidelines.

2. USDA should allocate federal commodity entitlements to school districts based on the number of breakfasts each district serves, in addition to the number of lunches served.

3. USDA/California Department of Education (CDE) should aggressively promote alternatives to conventional breakfast, including Second Chance Breakfast, Grab n' Go Breakfast, and Breakfast in the Classroom by expanding training opportunities for school districts that operate innovative breakfast programs and school districts that want to do so.

4. Congress and/or the California State Legislature should re-instate California Fresh Start or adopt a similar program to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption through school breakfasts by providing a dedicated subsidy for serving fresh produce.

5. Congress should restore, and the California State Legislature should increase, the allocation of funds dedicated to start-up grants available to school districts that choose to implement new, innovative breakfast programs.

6. Congress and/or the California State Legislature should allocate funds dedicated to upgrade and repair facilities and equipment required by school districts to maintain or expand school breakfast programs.

School District Policy Recommendations

1. All school districts should provide students with opportunities to eat school breakfast before and during the school day as breakfast supports students' health and academic achievement.

2. School districts should offer full, reimbursable meals with very few or no a la carte sales to improve the dietary intake of students at school and to increase revenue from school meal programs.

3. School districts should schedule Second Chance Breakfast and lunch at least two hours apart to ensure that students are well-fed throughout the day and that participation in Second Chance Breakfast does not preclude participation in school lunch.