

BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



Case Study

2015 RIVERSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (RUSD): Rodney Taylor, *Nutrition Services Director*



DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

41 K-12 Traditional Public Schools¹
29 elementary schools
7 middle schools
5 high schools
1 other combination of grade levels

26,140 Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals²

40,948 Students Enrolled³

“The real champions were the principals themselves -- those that were proactive and wanted what was best for their kids.” –Rodney Taylor

FOOD QUALITY

The requirement for serving more fruit (a federal rule resulting from the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act) has not been a challenge for RUSD. The only fruit the district offers via BAB is fresh fruit. That change, combined with the district’s salad bar program, has increased fruit consumption and reduced food waste.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Before BAB implementation

Participation among all students averaged 18% for elementary schools and 15% for middle and high schools.

After BAB implementation

- ➔ RUSD elementary schools with classroom breakfast reach 90% of enrolled students.
- ➔ The breakfast program reaches more than 30% of low-income students at RUSD middle schools and 30% of low-income students at RUSD high schools.⁴

BREAKFAST MODELS



Before BAB service models: RUSD schools served traditional breakfast in the school cafeteria before the first bell.

10 years ago: middle and high schools began grab n’ go, offering breakfast during passing periods before homeroom

8 years ago: select elementary schools switched to BAB.

For the last 3-4 school years: 6 elementary schools have moved to the classroom breakfast model, with the remainder continuing grab n’ go served at mid-morning recess.

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy

RUSD gave each school the option to choose the model of Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) which best suited their needs. The district also conducted pilots to address concerns and identify successful practices before expanding BAB to new schools.

Hurdles

There was initial resistance from some janitors, teachers, and administrators. These stakeholders had concerns about attracting pests, creating mess, and increasing workloads. There were also concerns that kids may breakfast eat at home and eat a second breakfast at school, thereby increasing the risk for obesity.

Solutions

- ➔ Allowing schools and teachers flexibility in choosing a BAB model was key to getting buy-in from resistant stakeholders groups.
- ➔ Allowing students to pick up breakfasts on carts (grab n’ go) and using parent volunteers to assist teachers with classroom breakfast has helped mitigate any additional teacher workload.
- ➔ From their years of experience in and around the district, some stakeholders, including the janitor at Madison school, recognized the need for BAB first-hand.



“If every school district had after the bell breakfast, those [districts] that are struggling would be in much better financial health.” –

Rodney Taylor

Program Finances

BAB start-up costs varied among schools according to the model implemented: lower for grab n’ go schools and higher for schools serving breakfast in the classroom.

- RUSD received grant funding (\$300,000) from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to implement BAB at 25 schools. The grant was used to purchase necessary equipment.
- To start up classroom breakfast, RUSD used existing cafeteria funds and did not require external funding.
- The revenue from increased breakfast participation (meal reimbursements) has covered additional cost from operating BAB models. Classroom breakfast is cheaper to implement than grab n’ go.
- RUSD’ school nutrition program finances are strong. The district is making a \$5.4 million investment in kitchen facilities to increase capacity for scratch cooking. The budget surplus comes after a one-year budget deficit resulting from increased costs associated with the change in federal nutrition standards, primarily lunch standards and the new fruit requirement for breakfast. The increased costs associated with fruit/vegetables is driven by RUSD’s switch to fresh produce, not simply the federally required increase in the amount served.

PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

- Parents and students have been supportive of BAB.
- Generally speaking, teachers and principals have been slower to express support for BAB. Among teachers, one or two especially vocal critics have been the primary opponents of the program.
- The reaction from the larger community, including hunger advocates, health care providers, and researchers has been very positive.
- Teachers report decreased absenteeism and nurse visits after the implementation of BAB.

NOTES & REFERENCES

CFPA thanks Rodney Taylor for his time and insights into the school breakfast programs at Riverside Unified School District. Since participating in the case study, Mr. Taylor has moved on from his position at RUSD.

¹Traditional, 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/>

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/files/sp.asp>

⁴Source: CFPA analysis of school meal data provided by CDE for the 2014-15 school year. Breakfast participation is drawn from school-level meal claims for October 2014-April 2015.