

GEORGIA SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION
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2005 State Legislative Issue Paper

INTRODUCTION

In 1946 Congress passed the “Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act” largely due to the efforts of Georgia **Senator Richard B. Russell**. Today, the U. S. Department of Agriculture administers the school meals program at the Federal level, and the Georgia Department of Education’s Child Nutrition Office manages the program at the state level. In Georgia we have 100% of public schools participating in the school lunch program, and 92% of public schools participating in school breakfast. We serve an average of 1,032,365 lunches daily, and an average of 369,661 breakfasts. The number of schools offering breakfast at no charge to their students in 2003 is 253. We have a participation rate of **73%** in our school lunch programs and **26%** in the breakfast program.

- The majority of school lunch and breakfast programs in Georgia are self-supporting and receive *no direct local funding*.
- State funding is provided in the form of a salary base to keep the meal prices low and to promote quality meals.
- No state funding for breakfast is provided.
- School meal programs use Georgia agriculture products through USDA commodities and purchasing. School Nutrition Programs spent over \$216,062,000 on purchased food in Georgia in School Year 2003. The value of commodity foods received was \$39,996,613.
- The money generated by serving meals pays for salaries, benefits, food products, new and replacement kitchen equipment, some facilities, maintenance, and computer hardware and software.

ISSUES

1. **Support measures that will move Georgia’s children toward a healthy weight**, including increased physical activity in the schools and promoting the importance of healthy food choices. Following the lead of other states, establish standards for the sale and service of all foods at school. Research shows that Georgia’s students are more overweight than students nationally. Diet and exercise are skills students must learn. Schools set the example by which students and parents learn.
2. **Support legislation that will include school breakfasts in the funding formula for state funds**. Research tells us again and again that breakfast enhances students’ learning. Schools require additional funds to implement creative techniques of serving breakfasts to students in a short period of time and over large campuses. Examples are breakfast in the classroom, kiosks, and mobile dining carts.
3. **Fund the “Manager’s Supplement” at the level currently authorized: an increase from \$400 to \$1000 annually**. This is authorized for the school nutrition program managers. These program managers are responsible for Georgia’s leading the nation in the percentage of students who choose school meals.
4. **Increase funding for retirement benefits for those in Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) from \$13.00 per month per year of service to \$20.00 per month per year of service**. At the current level, often the retiree cannot even pay for state health insurance.
5. **Eliminate the age penalty in PSERS so a member of this retirement system can retire at any age after 30 years of service**. Currently, a person in the PSERS may retire after 10 years of employment, but must reach 65 years of age before receiving full benefits. The Teacher Retirement System already allows this. The actuarial study was completed in 2002 but the legislation did not pass.

*The **MISSION** of Georgia School Food Service Association is to advance availability, quality and acceptance of school nutrition programs as an integral part of education.*

