School Breakfast Matters

Reach of School Breakfast

School breakfast participation has doubled in just 20 years. By 2019, nearly 15 million children participated in school breakfast every day and 85% of them qualified for free or reduced price meals. One in seven children in the U.S. is food insecure with much higher rates projected due to COVID-19. School breakfast reaches children who are most at-risk for food insecurity, providing them vital nutrition to support mood, attention, and cognition.

Daily Participation in School Breakfast
(Millions of Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>9.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>14.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>14.8 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent of students who receive free or reduced price breakfast

Breakfast & Brain Activation

Significantly higher brain activation is observed in the pre-frontal cortex when a nutritionally balanced breakfast is consumed. This area of the brain is involved in the control of emotion, mood, expectations, behavior, reward, decision-making, and cognition. Thus, a child who is fed a nutritious breakfast is likely to be more calm, focused, organized, thoughtful and ready to learn.

Looking at the Science

Breakfast is linked with numerous health and educational benefits — including improved academic performance, increased school attendance, more focused classroom behavior, and better dietary intake.

A systematic review of 45 breakfast studies showed that:

- Students who eat breakfast have positive outcomes, such as
  - Improved math & memory
  - Better satiety, and
  - Increased attention in class.

Nutritionally vulnerable children demonstrated the most substantial outcomes on their

- Verbal skills,
- Memorization, and
- Matching tests.

Call to Action: Help create awareness of the numerous health and educational benefits of school breakfast and encourage children to participate in the school breakfast program.
References:


