

Texas School Breakfast Report Card shows improvement

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WACO—Texas has become a national leader in school breakfast participation, moving up to 10th in the state rankings, thanks in part to the passage in 2013 of Texas Senate Bill 376—the “Universal Breakfast Bill.”

That’s one finding from the Texas School Breakfast Report Card produced by Baylor University’s Texas Hunger Initiative.

Released to cap off National School Breakfast Week, the 2016-17 edition of the Texas School Breakfast Report Card captures breakfast participation data for Texas counties and more than 1,000 school districts.

The report continues to be a powerful example of how data can be used to fight hunger, said Kathy Krey, director of the Texas Hunger Initiative.

“We’re able to step back and look at this data as a whole, which allows us to see which schools are having success and how to replicate that,” she said. “Then we’re able to offer guidance and resources to help schools across Texas—and the U.S.—increase participation in school breakfast, improve their performance, and ultimately, reduce childhood food insecurity.”

Now in its fourth edition, the Texas School Breakfast Report Card provides an overview of the school breakfast program, the benefits of school breakfast, creative models for serving breakfast and proven success strategies.

This edition looks back at breakfast participation over the last several years, highlighting successes and opportunities to increase participation

over the next few years.

It also compares 2016-17 school breakfast participation to participation in 2013-14. It also shows the potential for growth, both in number of students served and reimbursements gained, if each Texas school district had the 70 percent benchmark, a national goal set by the Food Research and Action Center.

Key findings include:

- According to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 314 million breakfasts were served in Texas schools in 2016-17, which led to a \$558 million reimbursement for Texas schools.
- 62.8 percent of students eating free or reduced-price lunch are eating school breakfast.
- 32 percent of public districts and charters have met the 70 percent benchmark.
- Texas could reach an additional 184,000 students and accrue \$51 million in reimbursement if the state met the 70 percent benchmark.
- As a result of SB 376 passed in 2013, Texas has seen a 4 percent increase in school breakfast participation, serving an additional 10.5 million meals.

The Report Card also provides recommendations for ways schools, agencies and the state legislature could increase participation in school breakfast:

- Implement alternative service models at schools, such as Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab-and-Go and Second Chance Breakfast;
- Develop a statewide system to track the use of various service models;
- Incorporate school meals into state plans, such as TEA's Every Student Succeeds Act.

- Pass Breakfast-After-the-Bell statewide legislation.

“We’re excited that we’ve seen increased participation and progress toward our goal over the last several years,” Krey said. “In particular, the increase since the Universal Breakfast Bill was passed demonstrates that, when school districts, state agencies and elected officials work collaboratively, significant change can be made. We look forward to continuing this collaboration and bringing an end to food insecurity in Texas.”

Recent empirical studies published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* and *AMA Pediatrics* and conducted by Sodexo Foundation, FRAC and No Kid Hungry continue to show the role school breakfast can play in improving nutrient intake, increasing attendance and improving test scores among students.

A 2011 research study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* suggests state policies requiring school breakfast reduces food insecurity among elementary students.

Educational and health benefits noted

Regular consumption of breakfast is associated with educational benefits such as:

- Improved school performance.
- Higher attendance rates.
- Better concentration and alertness.
- More energy and better attention.
- Short-term benefits in improving selected learning skills, particularly memory.

School breakfast participation also is linked to these health benefits:

- Lower body mass index and lower probability of obesity and being

overweight

- Fewer visits to the school nurse.
- Improvements in children's mental health, including reducing behavior problems, anxiety and depression.
- Better eating habits among children.
- Fewer vitamin deficiencies.
- Decreased likelihood of experiencing chronic illnesses.

For more information on the Texas Hunger Initiative's work and to read the full Texas School Breakfast Report Card, click [here](#).