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## **New National Report: NYC Schools Serve More Breakfasts But NYC, and Most Cities in the Nation, Still Lag**

### **Advocates Applaud NYC Efforts and Encourage More Progress; Call for Federal Government to Pass Strong Child Nutrition Bill**

Despite the significant progress that New York City public schools achieved by making universal school breakfast available to all students regardless of family income, New York City has the second lowest participation rate out of 25 large American cities, and most cities lag significantly in program participation, according to a new report by the national anti-hunger group, the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) titled “School Breakfast in America’s Big Cities.” {Report available at: [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).}

An initiative started by the Bloomberg Administration to adopt universal school breakfast and to allow some children to eat breakfast in their classrooms has helped to increase breakfast participation in New York City. Currently, the New York City Department of Education Office of SchoolFood program serves 160,000 school breakfasts a day and in-classroom breakfast programs have expanded to 139 classrooms.

Still, according to the FRAC study, 67.5 percent of low-income public school students in New York fail to receive them. Only 32.5 percent of the city’s children who obtain school lunches obtain school breakfasts, compared to 59.2 percent in Pittsburgh, 95.7 percent in Newark, 62.6 percent in Boston, and 55.1 percent in Los Angeles. The report indicates that the districts with higher participation rates tend to make breakfast available in classrooms more frequently than does New York City, where most children must still face the stigma of going to a separate lunchroom to eat breakfast. However, a main theme of the report is the lagging participation in *all* the cities, with 22 of the 25 cities providing breakfast to fewer than 60% of the students receiving lunch.

“The Bloomberg Administration and the Department of Education (DOE) Office of SchoolFood have made valiant efforts to increase school breakfast participation in the city,” said Executive Director Joel Berg, New York City Coalition Against Hunger. “Serving universal breakfast and expanding the current pilot program for in-classroom breakfasts was an excellent initiative. Unfortunately, the data in this report shows that virtually all the nation’s big cities have ample work to do to catch up with the growing need for good nutrition among low-income students. This report is good motivation to work harder to incorporate in-classroom breakfasts in more schools.”

The report calculated that if New York City increased the percentage of children who receive lunch and who also receive breakfast from the current rate of 32.5 percent to a rate of 70 percent, the school system would have an additional \$47.6 million in federal funding per year and be able to feed an additional 191,484 low-income students.

Continued Berg, “Increasing breakfast participation will boost test scores and improve child health and well-being, and it would also bring significant federal dollars into the city. For all those reasons, DOE, parents, educational unions, elected officials, and advocates all must make it a top priority to work together to raise breakfast participation levels. Moreover, this report shows that under-participation in the breakfast program is a national problem. To allow New York and other cities to provide more in-classroom breakfasts, President Obama and Congress should work together immediately to pass—and fully fund – a federal Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill that would support universal in-classroom school breakfasts.”