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# **School Breakfasts for Migrant Children**

**Increasing Participation in the School Breakfast Program  
for the Children of Migrant Farmworkers**

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### **Migrant Legal Action Program**

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# ***Why Breakfast?***

## ***What is the purpose of this document?***

The goal of this document is to provide more information about the ways school breakfast programs can serve migrant children. While many students participate in school lunch, far fewer are participating in school breakfast. For every 100 students participating in free or reduced lunch, only 44 are participating in free or reduced breakfast according to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). Migrant children, who need this important meal for nutrition and health, may be participating even less in many communities. More migrant children should be receiving breakfast through the School Breakfast Program than are currently benefiting from the program.

## ***What is the School Breakfast Program?***

The School Breakfast Program (SBP), which is part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), helps keep children healthy by providing nutritious breakfasts to children and youth in U.S. schools.

## ***Breakfast improves student performance***

No student can learn while feeling the pangs of hunger. Decades of research have documented that children learn better when they have breakfast.

## ***Breakfast improves nutrition and reduces food insecurity/hunger***

Growing minds require nourishment with a wide-variety of nutrients that may not always be available to migrant children because of their families' limited economic resources. Migrant children are at high risk for food insecurity and hunger. While there is no national data about food insecurity in migrant children, regional studies have put the rates of food insecurity or hunger nearly at 50% of migrant farmworker children. Having breakfast available every school day is an excellent way to reduce food insecurity and hunger.

## ***School breakfast can work for migrant children and youth***

The children of migrant farmworkers are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity because of unsteady income from farmwork. Participating in the Breakfast Program means that students can have a healthy breakfast every school morning.

# ***Breakfast Options***

## **The School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

### ***How does the School Breakfast Program work?***

School food authorities prepare breakfast within U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition guidelines. Breakfasts are available to all students on school days. Local school food authorities are reimbursed for meals served based on the free and reduced lunch eligibility of each student. Once students are signed up for free or reduced meals, they are eligible for all school meals (breakfast, lunch, snack) with no additional paperwork. Because the program is an entitlement program, there is always federal funding for every eligible child.

### ***What's special for migrant children?***

Children and youth identified as eligible for the Title I Migrant Education Program automatically receive free meals in school meal programs. No application is necessary. The local or state Migrant Education Program director or federal program director simply supplies a list of migrant students to the school food authority that is signed and dated by the director. A new or amended list must be provided as new students are enrolled. Once enrolled, a student is enrolled in the school food programs for the rest of the school year and the first thirty days of the following school year, even if the student's eligibility for the Title I Migrant Education Program changes.

### ***What options do schools have in implementing school breakfast?***

Schools can serve breakfast during class, after the first period, or even on the school bus. Schools in low-income areas can serve "universal breakfast" to all children without charging. Some schools chose to do this under Provision 2, which simplifies administration of the program. These administrative savings are used to provide breakfasts to all students – even those who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch. Universal breakfast helps increase participation and reduces the stigma attached to receiving free or reduced meals.

### ***Key Resources***

- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC):  
[www.frac.org/html/federal\\_food\\_programs/programs/sbp.html](http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/sbp.html)
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service  
[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast)
- USDA Policy Memo, August 16, 2004: "Categorical Eligibility for Free Lunches and Breakfasts for Migrant Children", available on the MLAP web site at:  
[www.mlap.org/sub\\_school\\_meals.htm](http://www.mlap.org/sub_school_meals.htm)

# Action Steps for Migrant Educators!

1

*Find out if the local schools where there are migrant students are serving school breakfast and when/how they serve breakfast.*

- Informally, survey local districts/programs to determine if and how they are participating in the School Breakfast Program.
- If migrant children are not currently participating, ask what barriers are preventing them from doing so.

2

*Contact your state child nutrition agency and discuss your interest in increasing the number of migrant students using the School Breakfast Program.*

- Explain that you are interested in making sure that all eligible migrant children participate in the School Breakfast Program and receive the full benefits of the program.
- Ask the child nutrition agency what efforts it is making to increase the number of children participating in the program.
- Ask if there are ways the state migrant education office can get involved to support the agency's efforts.

3

*Distribute materials to your local programs at trainings and throughout the year about the School Breakfast Program and the opportunities that exist for school food authorities to serve breakfast, lunch, supper and/or a snack to the children in their program.*

- Offer to connect schools that are interested in using the school breakfast program with those already participating, as an informal mentoring network.
- [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/toolkit/Default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/toolkit/Default.htm)

4

*Make sure school food authorities are receiving the most up-to-date lists of Title I Migrant Education Program eligible students.*

- Work to connect and build relationships between school food authorities and the migrant education program.

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