



BREAKFAST in the classroom

www.BreakfastintheClassroom.org

Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom: Food Research and Action Center | National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation
National Education Association Health Information Network | School Nutrition Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SELECTED AS GRANT RECIPIENT FOR BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM INITIATIVE THAT SERVES UP ACADEMIC AND HEALTH GAINS

***One of Five Major School Districts Sharing a \$3 Million Walmart Foundation Grant
and Benefiting from Hunger, Nutrition and Education Experts***

Washington, DC (May 3, 2011) – Four leading hunger, nutrition and education nonprofit organizations have selected Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland as a grant recipient for *Breakfast in the Classroom*, a new project funded by the Walmart Foundation. Through the \$3 million initiative, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation, National Education Association Health Information Network, and School Nutrition Foundation – collectively known as Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom – aim to increase breakfast consumption among schoolchildren and spark the academic and nutritional gains associated with the morning meal.

Prince George's County Public Schools, Dallas Independent School District, Texas; Little Rock School District, Arkansas; Memphis City Schools, Tennessee; and Orange County Public Schools, Florida (including Orlando) are among the five public school districts demonstrating exceptional need and potential for success chosen to participate in *Breakfast in the Classroom*. By expanding free breakfast to all students and moving it from the cafeteria to the classroom at many high-need schools in these districts, *Breakfast in the Classroom* is substantially improving participation in federal School Breakfast Programs. Funds from the Walmart Foundation are being used to assist the schools with start-up and related costs.

A total of 21 Prince George's County Public Schools are now participating in *Breakfast in the Classroom* and the program has resulted in an immediate increase in students receiving breakfast. More

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than 720 classrooms of students now get a free breakfast at the beginning of their first period class, thanks to *Breakfast in the Classroom*.

"Simply eating a healthy breakfast can reap very substantial improvements to academic performance and health, but too many children miss out on breakfast and start the school day hungry," said Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., Superintendent for Prince George's County Public Schools. "*Breakfast in the Classroom* puts a fresh spin on the traditional school breakfast program by offering the morning meal to everyone in the classroom after the opening bell – a change that ensures every child starts the day with a healthy, well-balanced breakfast and is ready to learn."

"Providing children with a healthy breakfast every day is critical to ensuring that they have the nutrition they need to grow, learn and play," said Margaret McKenna, president of the Walmart Foundation. "The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom bring diverse expertise in working with community leaders, principals, teachers, education support professionals, school food service specialists, and anti-hunger advocates. We are proud to support this initiative as part of our commitment to fight hunger in America."

Breakfast in the Classroom is based on proven strategies for increasing school breakfast participation, particularly among low-income students, according to *School Breakfast in America's Big Cities 2011*, a report by the Food Research and Action Center that examines school breakfast programs in 29 large urban school districts in the United States.

The need for *Breakfast in the Classroom* at Prince George's County Public Schools is great. Data show that 53% of students in Prince George's County Public Schools are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals. However, according to the FRAC report, only 43% of Prince George's County Public School students who eat a free or reduced-price lunch are eating the breakfast at school that is available to them.

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Most U.S. schools participate in the School Breakfast Program, but less than half of the low-income children who are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast are eating it, according to Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom. Bus schedules, late arrivals to school and reluctance to be labeled "low income" are among the reasons that many students don't partake in cafeteria-based school breakfast.

The benefits of eating breakfast at school are well documented and expansive, including:

- Improvements to math and reading achievement, performance on standardized tests, and vocabulary;
- Improvements to concentration, alertness, comprehension, and memory;
- Reduced absenteeism and school nurse visits;
- Reduced obesity and improved eating habits, including increased consumption of fruit, milk and a wider variety of foods; and
- Improved behavior, decreased tardiness and fewer referrals to the disciplinary office.

According to the Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom, as more schools move to the *Breakfast in the Classroom* approach, federal School Breakfast Program participation will increase, thereby reducing hunger and improving educational achievement nationwide. In fact, the FRAC report released in January shows that many of the top-performing schools serve breakfast in the classroom.

Breakfast in the Classroom stems from Walmart and the Walmart Foundation's \$2 billion commitment to help fight hunger in America through 2015 that was announced last May. For more information, visit www.breakfastintheclassroom.org.

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