



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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Officials mark 50th anniversary of School Breakfast Program

USDA, End Hunger CT! join state leaders to highlight importance of morning meal

(HARTFORD, CT)—Federal, state, and local leaders gathered at Parkville School in Hartford on Thursday to mark the 50th anniversary of the national School Breakfast Program.

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, Commissioner of Education Dianna R. Wentzell, and USDA Food and Nutrition Service Administrator Audrey Rowe joined students and staff to talk about the importance of eating a healthy breakfast and its relationship to student performance. They were accompanied by representatives from End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger organization.

"School nutrition programs are a critical first step in ensuring young minds have what they need to grow," Lt. Gov. Wyman said. "Connecticut's future depends on what we do now—working together on behalf of students who are our next-generation workforce is a priority. I applaud the commitment of all our partners in these efforts."

"As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the School Breakfast Program, we reflect on the great strides the program has made in strengthening the health and nutrition of children in America," said USDA Food and Nutrition Service Administrator Audrey Rowe. "Starting the day with a well-balanced breakfast has been proven to contribute to students' ability to perform well in the classroom. Going forward, USDA will continue to support the School Breakfast Program by providing the resources and support necessary to give kids the kick-start they need to be healthy and strong all day long."

2015 Connecticut School Breakfast Program	
Meals Served	16,754,008
Schools Participating	885
Districts Participating	170
State and Federal Funding	\$32,329,333

"Our promise to our kids is to give every student access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success in life. A healthy breakfast gives kids a healthy foundation for learning and sets them up for success," Commissioner Wentzell said. "The national School Breakfast Program has been giving students a healthy start to their day for 50 years. We are committed to seeing it expand into more communities and helping more students in the days ahead."

"Serving breakfast at school is one of the best tools for academic success for students. Research shows students who eat breakfast as part of the school day are better learners. We salute Parkville Elementary School and the school nutrition staff for embracing the Grab 'n Go breakfast model because it's proven to capture more students, helping more students start their day off right. It's a win-win, especially in a community like Hartford that has high rates of food insecurity. This may seem like a short-term program, but its effects will last a lifetime

for these students, from less absenteeism to higher graduations rates," said Lucy Nolan, executive director of End Hunger CT!

The national School Breakfast Program is a USDA meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to ensure that schoolchildren have access to a well-balanced meal every morning that class is in session.

Research has consistently shown that hunger can distract students from learning, and students who eat breakfast benefit nutritionally and educationally. Offering a nutritious breakfast at school improves student performance, behavior, attendance, and comprehension in the classroom. Busy parents also benefit from the program because their children receive a healthy, balanced, and affordable meal at school.

A partnership formed in 2009 with the State Department of Education, the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, End Hunger Connecticut!, the New England Dairy and Food Council, and Action for Healthy Kids established the Connecticut School Breakfast Expansion Team to increase participation and spread the program to more schools. This week, the State Department of Education is sending a memo to districts that are not participating in the School Breakfast Program strongly urging them to serve breakfast.

In 2015, 81 percent of schools in Connecticut participated, and 284 schools have added a breakfast program since the team was formed for a total of 885 schools statewide.

School Breakfast Programs in Connecticut operate as meal reimbursement programs. Reimbursements come in the form of cash payments to districts and are provided according to the number of meals served.

End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!) is a statewide anti-hunger organization and serves as a comprehensive anti-hunger resource for community organizations, legislators, and low-income families. As leaders working in collaboration with countless partners to fight hunger, EHC! catalyzes the implementation of policies and best practices in school districts and communities across the state. Its work builds capacity to improve nutrition, academic achievement, and long-term food security, positively affecting the health of children far beyond their school-age years.

End Hunger Connecticut! partners closely with Hartford Public Schools on summer meals, supper, and school breakfast programs and supported the Hartford Food and Child Nutrition Services in securing funds to expand breakfast to a Grab 'n Go at Parkville Elementary School and others throughout the district. The deputy director of End Hunger CT! is a member of the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy. The commission provides recommendations to city leaders for expanding access to healthy food for Hartford residents, which have included supporting efforts to maximize Hartford's participation in federally funded child nutrition programs.

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