



Mesquite ISD: Serves Universal Free School Breakfast

Snapshot of Mesquite ISD in 2015/2016

| <i>Students Enrolled in District¹</i> | | <i>Campuses in District¹</i> | |
|--|--------------|---|----------|
| Total Students | 43,907 | Total Campuses | 47 |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced Price | 32,635 (74%) | Over 80% Free/Reduced Price Eligible | 19 (40%) |
| Eating Breakfast (2015-2016) | 9,849 (22%) | Over 70% Free/Reduced Price Eligible | 35 (74%) |

The Mesquite ISD Breakfast Program...

Background. Mesquite Independent School District, located in North Texas, consists of 47 campuses and 43,907 students. Mesquite ISD has a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals and 40% of the district’s campuses have over 80% free and reduced price students. In the 2015/2016 school year, 8 elementary schools in the district were serving free Breakfast in the Classroom and utilizing a Grab and Go model at on high school with great success. The district hopes to build upon this success as it continues to expand its breakfast service to additional campuses.

Breakfast Champion. Mesquite ISD Food and Nutrition Services recognized a need in campuses with high percentages of free and reduced price students. Some principals were struggling with breakfast participation, such as students coming to school too late to eat breakfast. They wanted to provide more opportunities for children to eat breakfast. Nutrition staff saw this as an opportunity to better serve their students and began to advocate for alternative breakfast models, specifically Breakfast in the Classroom. The department is currently looking into piloting the Grab ‘n Go breakfast method at a high school. This method provides more independence and flexibility for older students.

Breakfast in the Classroom: Implementation Tips

- Meet with principals and teachers to develop Breakfast In the Classroom program plan
- Campus administrators alert parents of free breakfast program and any associated changes
- Each Breakfast in the Classroom program may be a little different based on characteristics and needs of campus
- Individually wrapped foods are easiest to serve in the classroom
- Prepare breakfast service items the day before
- Offer free breakfast to all faculty and staff involved with serving Breakfast in the Classroom
- Start with a small pilot program – work out the kinks and then expand
- First week is a challenge until everyone gets comfortable with process

1. NSLP and SBP Meal Data for 9/2015 through 5/2016, Texas Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition, 2016.

Breakfast at a Glance

- 8 campuses serving Breakfast in the Classroom
- Grab and Go at Mesquite High School
- Breakfast program is cost neutral

Getting Buy-in. Area partners reached out to the administrators in Mesquite ISD to discuss the need for a universal school breakfast program in the district. It was in this meeting that both administrators and the Mesquite ISD nutrition director, Bette Mogg, decided to pilot a Breakfast in the Classroom program. Mogg identified two principals who were interested in beginning the program. As the next step, Lark Stewart, Mesquite ISD Dietitian, stated it was important to gain teacher support for breakfast expansion, as teachers play a major role in making Breakfast in the Classroom successful. Principals convened meetings to share information with teachers and provide training on the implementation

process. To increase teacher and staff support, Mesquite ISD decided to offer free breakfast to all teachers and staff assisting with program implementation. Success was seen with these two schools, and the program was extended to five additional schools this year.

Program Cost. Mesquite ISD's expanded breakfast program is cost neutral. Lark Stewart, states this is because they are serving many more meals at those campuses. Stewart states her department has absorbed the costs of new USDA food regulations while still maintaining a cost neutral nutrition program.

For More Information about Mesquite ISD's breakfast program, please contact Bette Mogg, Nutrition Director, or Lark Stewart, Dietitian, at (972) 882-5500.



In the Spotlight: Floyd Elementary School¹

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|---------------------------------|-----|
| Total Students | 913 |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced Price | 95% |
| Total Eating Breakfast | 65% |
| Free/Reduced Eating Breakfast | 62% |

Visit Mesquite ISD's website at www.mesquiteisd.org to learn more about the district, and www.mesquiteisd.org/departments/food/index.html to learn more about Food and Nutrition Services.

CHILDREN AT RISK is a research and advocacy organization promoting the wellbeing of children in Texas. We are reaching out to school districts across the state encouraging and supporting their transition to Universal Free School Breakfast (USB). As part of our outreach efforts, we are developing a series of case studies featuring the best practices of school districts already implementing USB. These case studies will serve as a reference and guide for districts expanding their breakfast programs.

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