



# Socorro ISD: Serves Universal Free School Breakfast

## Snapshot of Socorro ISD in 2012/2013

Students Enrolled in District <sup>1</sup>		Campuses in District <sup>1</sup>	
Total Students	44,299	Total Campuses	44
Eligible for Free/Reduced Price	31,839 (72%)	Over 80% Free/Reduced Price Eligible	16 (36%)
Eating Breakfast (2012-2013)	23,938 (54%)	Over 70% Free/Reduced Price Eligible	26 (59%)

### The Socorro ISD Breakfast Program...

**Background.** Socorro Independent School District, located in El Paso County, consists of 44 campuses and more than 44,000 students. The district is currently serving free Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) at all elementary and middle schools. Over 30,000 students have access to free breakfast at these campuses with 72% of the students qualifying for free and reduced price meals across the district. Campuses serving BIC in the 2012/2013 school year maintained an average of 81% breakfast participation!

**Breakfast Champion.** Shelley Chenausky, Socorro ISD nutrition director, has been a big advocate for universal free breakfast service. Through research and news reports, Chenausky and her team knew how beneficial a

#### Breakfast at a Glance

- **Breakfast in the Classroom** at all elementary and middle schools
- Pilot program in two high schools utilizing both the Grab and Go and the Second Chance Breakfast models

BIC program would be in Socorro ISD. In addition to the support from the nutrition department, Dr. José Espinoza, Superintendent of Schools has been a vocal supporter of the breakfast program. His support has been critical during the implementation process.

**Getting Started.** With support from the Superintendent's office, the Nutrition Department championed the importance of breakfast participation, and the need for a BIC program. The team made a decision to begin a pilot program in 10 elementary schools. In order to make the transition as smooth as possible, nutrition staff held meetings at every campus with principals and

teachers to share a PowerPoint presentation and ask the important question: "How can we make BIC work for you?" From this meeting, a unique plan was developed for each school; for some that plan utilized the Breakfast Club Kids while others utilized volunteers. Chenausky, reported that this planning and training were crucial to making BIC run efficiently. An additional step that was taken to ensure a successful transition was to create a menu that focused on healthy and convenient breakfast items. The nutrition department made sure that the meals served would not create an added burden on the teachers during clean up time. The department also took steps to ensure an easy meal counting procedure, and each classroom is equipped with a BIC pen and notepad to improve communication between teachers and cafeteria staff.

1. NSLP and SBP Meal Data for 9/2012 through 5/2013, Texas Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition, 2013.

**Transition to Breakfast in the Classroom.** As success was seen in the initial 10 pilot campuses, BIC was rolled out to the remaining elementary campuses, then to middle school campuses. In the Spring of 2014, a trial program began in two of Socorro ISD's high schools. Rather than serving BIC in high school, the Grab and Go model is used in conjunction with a Second Chance model. High school students unable to get breakfast before school are allowed a second chance to grab it before 10:00 AM. While this pilot program just began, Chenausky and her team hope to expand this service to all Socorro ISD high schools.

**Breakfast Challenges and Solutions.** Chenausky and her team faced a large challenge when they decided to roll out a BIC program: a similar program had been tried before in the district, and it was unsuccessful. When the decision came to try again the department knew it had to address the difficulties from the first time, and provide solutions. As previously mentioned, Chenausky decided the best way to address these would be to meet with the administration at every campus to formulate an individualized plan. Another challenge the nutrition team faced was low participation. The team consistently looked into reasons why certain days had lower participation, and found solutions. To encourage participation in the new high school pilot program, the nutrition department decided to enlist the help of both the school band and cheerleaders. Both groups created signs, and made announcements to bring attention to the breakfast program.

**Program Cost.** Socorro ISD has been able to operate their BIC program without seeing financial deficits. In fact, with the increase in participation that comes with serving breakfast at no charge for all students, serving BIC has been a cost beneficial decision. The department is using the high school pilot program, currently in two high schools, to determine the costs of expanding this program to all high school campuses. Only one high school in Socorro ISD has 80% or more students who qualify for free or reduced meals, so the district wants to be certain the expansion will be feasible.

**For More Information** about Socorro ISD's breakfast program, please contact Shelley Chenausky, Nutrition Director, at (915)937-0467.

Visit Socorro ISD's website at <http://www.sisd.net/page/120> to learn more about the district.

#### *Breakfast in the Classroom: Implementation Tips*

- Meet with principals and teachers to develop tailored BIC program plan
- Build menu around healthy food and easy cleanup; most foods are individually wrapped
- Offer free breakfast to all faculty and staff involved with serving BIC
- Develop easy-to-use meal counting system
- Start with a small pilot program – work out the kinks and then expand



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 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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