



Pittsburg ISD: Serves Universal Free School Breakfast

Snapshot of Pittsburg ISD in 2013/2014

| Students Enrolled in District ¹ | | Campuses in District ¹ | |
|--|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Total Students | 2,479 | Total Campuses | 5 |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced Price | 1,998 (81%) | Over 80% Free/Reduced Price Eligible | 4 (80%) |
| Eating Breakfast (2013-2014) | 774 (31%) | Over 70% Free/Reduced Price Eligible | 5 (100%) |

The Pittsburg ISD Breakfast Program...

Background. Pittsburg Independent School District, located in East Texas, consists of five campuses and over 2,500 students. Pittsburg ISD has a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals with four of the five campuses having over 80% of their students qualifying for these meals. At the start of the 2014/2015 school year, Pittsburg ISD began utilizing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in order to serve both breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students. For the elementary and middle schools, the district utilizes the traditional model, serving breakfast in the cafeteria when the students are dropped off in the morning. Meanwhile, the high school campus serves breakfast on kiosks across the campus before the start of school, as well as to students in the band hall in a Second Chance service. Since making the switch to

Community Eligibility

- The school district can serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to students
- This has increased participation in both lunch and breakfast in Pittsburg ISD

CEP this school year, Pittsburg ISD has acquired, on average, an additional 180 students eating breakfast with nearly 3,000 more meals served this year compared to last year.

Community Eligibility Provision Under the CEP, Pittsburg ISD must offer free school breakfast to all children in the district without collecting applications. This provision is beneficial for the students as it reduces the stigma associated with eating a school meal, and benefits the school district by reducing the amount of paperwork collected by the Nutrition Department. This reduction in paperwork helps to keep administrative costs low, and eases the responsibilities of school staff and faculty. Rather than collecting

the Federal Free/Reduced Price Meal Applications, the district relies on a formula to receive meal reimbursements. This formula relies on the percentage of “eligible students”- that is, students certified for free school meals without an application due to their enrollment in designated assistance programs- multiplied by a factor of 1.6.

Breakfast Champion. Judy Pollan, Superintendent of Pittsburg ISD, served as the champion for the district’s decision to transition to CEP and offer Universal School Breakfast. Ms. Pollan realized the importance of breakfast for her students, and she wanted every student to have the opportunity to eat a free breakfast each day before the school bell rings.

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

Gaining Buy-In In order to ensure sustainable buy-in during the transition to CEP, Child Nutrition Director, Karyn Buckner, knew she needed to have support from the campus administrators. One administrator she knew would be a great champion was the principal of the high school campus, Jonathan Hill. Mr. Hill recognized the importance of improving access to school breakfast, as he was aware of the low participation at his campus. He was fully supportive of any suggestions the nutrition department had, and because of his support the School Breakfast Program is flourishing.

Breakfast Challenges and Solutions. The biggest breakfast challenge faced by Pittsburg ISD was getting the high school principal and staff, and parents of the elementary and middle schools on board with the transition. Buckner foresaw a challenge in gaining support at the elementary and middle school level, because the idea of CEP had been suggested previously with very little support from parents. The parents were concerned that the program would not help all students, rather only a small percentage. Once additional information was delivered to the parents, support grew drastically. Not only were the parents supportive, but the district worked to ensure students would have easy access to a school breakfast by changing the location of the carpool and bus drop-off point, which is now located at the cafeteria. The last hurdle that Pittsburg ISD had to overcome was a dislike for the school breakfast menu. After getting feedback from the students, the Nutrition Department worked to include products that students were familiar with as well as adding kid-friendly brands to the choices.

Program Cost. The cost of operating the Universal Free School Breakfast program at Pittsburg ISD is currently unknown as this academic year is the first time the school district has implemented breakfast under CEP, but with increased participation, the district expects to have a self-sustaining Nutrition Department.

Tips for implementing a Self-Sustaining Meal Program

- *Get the support of the school district*
- *Find the foods that students will eat*
 - *The transition to more Brand-Named Products increased participation*
- *Work with the principal and cafeteria staff to develop a logistics plan that will work well for both*

For More Information about Pittsburg ISD's breakfast program, please contact , Karyn Buckner, Director of Food Services, at kbuckner@pittsburgisd.net
Visit Pittsburg ISD's website at www.pittsburgisd.net to learn more about the district.

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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