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ALABAMA SCHOOLS CELEBRATE NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK
Students Bolster Their Brainpower with School Breakfast

Montgomery, Ala. – Children who eat breakfast at school start the day ready to learn as is reflected in higher test scores and better classroom behavior. However only half of the children who eat lunch at school also eat school breakfast, according to the Food Research and Action Council.

To garner increased participation in the National School Breakfast Program, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is encouraging schools across the state to recognize National School Breakfast Week. Slated for March 2-6, 2015, National School Breakfast Week is a weeklong celebration aimed at increasing awareness of the School Breakfast Program among students and parents.

The 2015 theme, “Make the Grade with School Breakfast,” reminds everyone in the school community – parents, students, administrators – that a healthy school breakfast sets students up for a day of learning and academic success. The theme will appear in school cafeterias throughout National School Breakfast Week.

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The ALSDE Child Nutrition Program Coordinator June Barrett credits much of the success of the National School Breakfast Program to the foodservice professionals who make the program work in 1,345 school sites statewide. Over 37 million breakfast meals were served to Alabama students during the 2013-2014 school year.

“We recognize that for nearly 49 years, the National School Breakfast Program has contributed to the health and educational development of Alabama’s children by making nutritious morning meals available in K-12 public schools,” Barrett said. “A school breakfast is often the only morning meal available to many children, and, therefore, represents a vital part of the initiative to improve the educational skills of our students, which in turn helps prepare them for life.”

Research shows that breakfast eaters are found to be more content and have better moods than those who do not consume breakfast. In addition:

- Breakfast provides an important contribution to nutrient intake throughout the day and many studies have found a link between breakfast intake and lower weight.

- Children who eat breakfast at school are found to be more alert than those who do not eat breakfast.

- Eating breakfast has been associated with enhanced short-term memory among schoolchildren.

- Students’ tardiness rates are typically lower and correspondingly attendance rates are typically higher for breakfast consumers compared with those students who skip breakfast.

- Overall academic and achievement scores are higher for students who consume breakfast more regularly than their peers who typically skip breakfast; the end result being an improvement in grades.

Barrett notes that many schools serve breakfast in the morning, and several are very creative in how they go about doing so. Some have set up breakfast carts or “Grab ‘n’ Go” kiosks near the drop-off point for school buses and areas where students are likely to congregate before classes start.

“Grab ‘n’ Go” breakfasts are typically pre-packaged for students to quickly retrieve and take with them, allowing them to eat breakfast when and where they want, within school guidelines. Breakfats are usually continental-type items, but often include hot items. Many students like this breakfast option because they get a nutritious meal and also have time to socialize with their friends in the morning, Barrett said.

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Some schools have received grants from the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association, Inc., to start “Breakfast in the Classroom” programs, which allow students to eat breakfast in the classroom at the beginning of the day or during morning break time. Barrett said that most teachers take attendance or deliver announcements while their students are eating breakfast, so little instructional time is lost.

“Make the Grade with School Breakfast” was created by the non-profit School Nutrition Association with support from Kellogg’s Foodservice. National School Breakfast Week was launched in 1989 to raise awareness of the availability of the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to all children and to promote the links between eating a good breakfast, academic achievement, and healthy lifestyles.

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