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Pennsylvania on the Losing End of New School Breakfast Scorecard

Delaware County School Shows Blueprint to Helping More Children Start the Day with a Healthy Meal

DARBY, PA (February 10th, 2015) – Forty other states do a better job than Pennsylvania in making sure that students start the school day with a healthy breakfast, according to the “School Breakfast Scorecard” issued by the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). FRAC’s research shows that only 45% of low-income children who eat lunch at school are also eating breakfast, ranking Pennsylvania 41st, nationally.

“Pennsylvania needs to up its game. This report shows that less than half of the students taking advantage of federally subsidized school lunches are also getting a healthy school breakfast. School districts can do a better job making sure that low-income children have a healthy breakfast and they can do so at nearly no cost,” said Donna Cooper, Executive Director of Public Citizens for Children and Youth. “The State can also play a major role and this report should be just the wake up call it needs to ensure Pennsylvania starts to make the kinds of gains seen in other states.”

Penn Wood Middle School is an example of a school district that is changing how it operates so more students can have a good school breakfast by adopting the Breakfast in the Classroom model. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, the middle school started serving breakfast in their homerooms. As a result, breakfast participation jumped from 23% in SY 2014 to 80% in SY 2015.

“It was very easy for us to adopt this model and shift from two in ten children starting the day right to eight in ten and we hope to make it ten in ten very soon,” said Devin Layton, Principal of Penn Wood Middle School. “Our students are better focused, and we know research shows they will be better learners if they start the school day with a healthy meal.”

Rafi Cave, a William Penn School Board member and PCCY hunger outreach coordinator for Delaware County pointed out, “We at William Penn are looking at ways to implement the programs at other schools in the district so more students can focus on their education instead of hunger.”

PCCY and the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger led the outreach effort for the SY 2014 Statewide School Breakfast Challenge. More than 1,000 schools participated in the challenge and more than 9,000 additional students were given access to healthy breakfast as a result.

“The William Penn School District is proof positive that with a bit of help and encouragement schools will do what it takes to fight hunger and help children focus on learning,” said Tracey Specter of the

Specter Family Foundation and major supporter of the 2014 Breakfast Challenge. The second year of the Pennsylvania School Breakfast Challenge will kick off next month during National School Breakfast week from March 2-6th.

The Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger notes a new federal option, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), is available in Pennsylvania for the first time this year and has great potential to help the State improve its low rank next year. CEP eases the administrative burden and strengthens financial support for high poverty school districts so they can offer free meals to all students. CEP has been adopted at 26 Pennsylvania school districts, as well as at dozens of additional individual public, charter and parochial schools.

“CEP is a great new tool that will allow schools to reach more students,” said Kathy Fisher, Policy Manager at the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger. “But to make a real difference in supporting kids so they can succeed, we need many more schools to follow Penn Wood Middle School by offering Breakfast in the Classroom and other options to make breakfast part of the school day.”

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About the report:

The full report, *School Breakfast Scorecard*, is available at www.frac.org. To measure the reach of the School Breakfast Program nationally and in the states, FRAC compares the number of schools and low-income children that participate in breakfast to those that participate in the National School Lunch Program.