

# BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



## Case Study

**2015 EL MONTE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (EMCSD):** Dr. Robert Lewis, *Director, Nutrition Services*



### 2015 DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

**15** K-12 Traditional Public Schools<sup>1</sup>

1 K-5 elementary school

7 K-6 elementary schools

7 K-8 elementary/middle schools

**8,180** Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals<sup>2</sup>

**9,031** Students Enrolled<sup>3</sup>

**"BAB helps reduce stigma sometimes associated with school breakfast. Grab n' Go breakfast is the cool thing for middle school students to do."**

—Dr. Robert Lewis

### FOOD QUALITY

Menus are continually updated to incorporate teacher/parent feedback and to integrate information that is shared between EMCSD schools about what menu items are popular with students.

Sharing best practices among schools, including both menu design and operations, has been key to the successful adoption and continuous improvement of the BAB program district-wide.

### BREAKFAST MODELS



#### Before Breakfast After the Bell (BAB)

**service models:** Prior to BAB implementation in 2013, all 15 schools were serving breakfast before the bell in the school cafeteria.

**Breakfast in the Classroom:** Classroom Breakfast is offered in all elementary school classrooms.

**Grab n' Go Breakfast:** All middle schools offer a Grab n' Go breakfast to students during the mid-morning passing period, as they walk to class.

### BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC IMPACTS

#### After BAB implementation

- ➔ Students are more alert in class, calmer in the morning, and require fewer visits to the school nurse.
- ➔ Attendance for the 2013-14 school year increased 4%, equivalent to 364 more students attending class per school day.
- ➔ The communal eating time is used productively as sharing time or as additional time for reading.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Strategy

In Spring 2012, the Nutrition Services department began planning the BAB rollout. The EMCSD Superintendent was an early supporter. In summer 2012, Nutrition Services staff held meetings with principals, custodians, teachers, and Nutrition Services staff workers to get buy-in for the program change and address any questions and concerns.

#### Hurdles

Some teachers were initially resistant to the changes, citing common concerns about loss of instructional time and increased need for classroom clean up.

#### Solutions

➔ Recognizing the need for teacher and parent support, Nutrition Services organized stakeholder meetings prior to any program changes. The new BAB model was implemented one school at a time over several months, so the Nutrition Services department could address concerns and implementation issues early in the process. The result was a smooth rollout that was free of any surprises for staff or parents.

➔ Custodians were provided with new rolling trash cans and carts which addressed their concerns about increased clean up duties.

➔ EMCUSD offers universally free breakfast, which helps eliminate the stigma sometimes associated with low-income students participating in the school breakfast program.



**"PARENTS  
LOVE THE  
BREAKFAST  
AFTER THE BELL  
PROGRAM."**

*–Dr. Robert  
Lewis*

## **PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

### **Before BAB implementation**

Prior to BAB implementation, EMSCD breakfast participation was 32% of enrolled students.

### **After BAB implementation**

- ➔ In the 2014-15 school year, the first year of full implementation, participation increased to 82%-85% of enrolled students.

## **PROGRAM FINANCES**

- 2013 startup costs were covered by grants from Action for Healthy Kids.
- In 2015, EMSCD applied for a California Department of Education Breakfast Expansion grant to cover expenses like trash can liners and insulated thermal bags.
- The program is financially sustainable: in 2013-14, Nutrition Services ended the year with a \$477,000 revenue surplus, due largely to increased breakfast participation resulting from the switch to BAB.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT**

- Perception of program impact is positive among stakeholder groups, including principals, teachers, students, parents, and custodial staff.
- In addition to the additional revenue that increased participation brings the district, teachers and administrators report greatly reduced stigma associated with breakfast participation, particularly among middle school students
- Parents have said they love the program and parent volunteers assist with the program at lower grade levels.
- Custodial staff have been supportive once initial concerns were addressed by the district providing additional equipment like trash cans and wheeled carts.

## **NOTES & REFERENCES**

CFPA thanks Dr. Robert Lewis for his time and insights into the school breakfast programs at El Monte City School District.

<sup>1</sup>Traditional, non-charter K-12 schools that were active in the 2014-15 school year. This excludes sites such as continuation schools, virtual schools, and independent study schools. Source: California Department of Education (CDE) School Directory at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/>

<sup>2-3</sup>Students certified as eligible for free and reduced-price meals in traditional, non-charter K-12 schools during the 2014-15 school year. Source: CFPA analysis of the FRPM student poverty data file available from CDE at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filessp.asp>