

# BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



## Case Study

2016 LEMON GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT (LGSD): Robin McNulty, *Director of Nutrition Services (former)*



### 2015 DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

6 P-8 Traditional Public Schools<sup>1</sup> 3  
P-6 elementary schools  
1 P-7 elementary/middle schools  
2 P-8 elementary/middle schools

2,974 Students Eligible for Free or  
Reduced-Price School Meals<sup>2</sup>

3,922 Students Enrolled<sup>3</sup>

**"The initial opposition we faced decreased after people saw how well the program worked."** –Robin McNulty

### FOOD QUALITY

LGSD serves hot breakfast two times a week. Parents often ask for more fresh fruit, which is sometimes challenging because it can be fragile. Whole fruit is served more often than cut fruit.

The district uses the USDA Foods program to serve more whole grains, eggs, and cheese.

### BREAKFAST MODELS



#### Before Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) service models:

LGSD served traditional breakfast in the cafeteria beginning 30 minutes before the first bell.

**Breakfast in the Classroom:** Since 2010, six of the seven schools have served breakfast in the classroom.

### BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC IMPACTS

#### After BAB implementation

- ➔ LGSD has seen quantifiable improvements to student attendance; average daily attendance has increased 1% since BAB implementation.
- ➔ Teachers report fewer incidents of tardiness.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Strategy

In 2010, the LGSD Nutrition Services Department started to explore the implementation of BAB at six schools, using the Classroom Breakfast model. The District held a School Breakfast Forum to inform stakeholders and the public about the plan. The Forum generated strong support among the broader community including parents and advocates.

#### Hurdles

Some principals had concerns that student involvement in Classroom Breakfast would negatively affect instructional time. Some teachers and parents had concerns about the appeal of the meals.

#### Solutions

- ➔ LGSD sought student input into how BAB service was implemented. Nutrition Services staff helped with service for younger grades, while older students participated in the delivery and set up of meals.
- ➔ The district addressed concerns about meal appeal by increasing the variety of foods offered.
- ➔ Community and anti-hunger advocates helped gain the support of decision makers on the school board.
- ➔ Students help deliver and put out the food family style for other students to serve themselves. Teachers and students monitor breakfast service and clean up afterwards.



**"Families reported enjoying the extra time at home, not having to rush in the morning."**

*—Robin McNulty*

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

### Before BAB implementation

Those sites that still only offer before the bell breakfast serve 30% of students.

### After BAB implementation

➔ Schools offering breakfast in the classroom serve 75%-80% of students.

## Program Finances

LGSD received privately-funded mini-grants and grants from the California Department of Education to help cover start-up costs.

- Increased student participation (and the resulting increase in federal and state reimbursement) provides the financial stability to maintain the program.
- With increased participation, the district could afford to hire additional staff (at 10-12 hours per week) -- and needed the extra staffing to cover the increased workload of the program.
- Extra revenue is reinvested into the program; the district is able to continuously provide cleaning supplies for the classrooms and kitchens, and to regularly update milk coolers for every school.
- Increased revenue allowed the district to expand refrigeration capacity, which in turn allowed for more fresh fruits and veggies to be served for all meal programs, including the lunch and supper programs.

## PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

- Reaction of major stakeholders within the school community has been positive.
- Students report that they love the program.
- Once they were invited to observe the program and saw the benefits, parents became very supportive.
- On site food service staff are very supportive and work well with Nutrition Services department administrators to operate the program smoothly.
- Support from the school board was key to moving forward with BAB implementation.

## NOTES & REFERENCES

CFPA thanks Robin McNulty for her time and insights into the school breakfast programs at Lemon Grove 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/filesasp>