



Serving Maryland's Children Measuring Access to the School Breakfast Program

Maryland Hunger Solutions | May 2013

Executive Summary

The federal School Breakfast Program is a vital tool in the effort to reduce childhood hunger, promote good health, and improve student achievement. Since the 2007-2008 school year, Maryland Hunger Solutions has analyzed data and reported on breakfast participation in all of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions (23 counties plus Baltimore City) and provided recommendations for expanding school breakfast participation. The 2011-2012 school year saw a notable advance: For the first time more than half of the low-income children in Maryland participating in the National School Lunch Program also participated in the School Breakfast Program. For every 100 low-income children who participated in the school lunch program, 51.3 participated in school breakfast.

Over the past five years, Maryland has made significant strides in expanding school breakfast participation across the state, in significant part because of work to get schools to adopt breakfast in the classroom and other "breakfast after the bell" strategies. During the 2011-2012 school year, 131,936 low-income students in Maryland started the day with a nutritious school breakfast—an increase of 16,607 students, or 14.4 percent, from the previous school year, and a 45 percent increase from the 2007-2008 school year when 90,815 low-income students ate breakfast. Maryland also continues to experience an increase in children participating in the school lunch program, with an additional 10,550 children participating during the 2011-2012 school year—a 4.3 percent increase from the previous year. The fact that the growth in school breakfast participation is outpacing the growth in school lunch demonstrates that efforts to expand school breakfast in Maryland are making a difference. While this progress is encouraging, many vulnerable children in Maryland still lack access to a nutritious breakfast as part of their school day. To meet the goal of 70 low-income students eating breakfast for every 100 who eat school lunch, it is essential for schools to implement the strategies that have increased school breakfast participation in some counties and expand them statewide.

Students Participating in SBP per 100 in NSLP 2011-2012 School Year	
Top 5 Jurisdictions	Ratio
Somerset	98.4
Kent	87
Dorchester	75
Garrett	67.4
Cecil	66.3
Bottom 5 Jurisdictions	Ratio
Howard	27.8
Carroll	38.8
Calvert	39.4
Queen Anne's	41.4
Baltimore City	46.4

Breakfast in Maryland—Key Concepts and Terms

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Meals: How It Works

Any public or private nonprofit school can participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. In Maryland, school districts must apply to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the administering state agency, in order to institute a program. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) administers the school meal programs.

All students in participating schools may take part in the school meal programs. Household income generally determines whether students receive free meals, reduced-price meals, or full-price (“paid”) meals. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line receive school meals free of charge. Children from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line receive school meals at a substantially reduced price. Children from families with incomes above 185 percent of the federal poverty level pay charges (referred to as “paid meals”) which are set by the school, and the schools also receive a small federal reimbursement for such children. However, as discussed elsewhere in this report, a growing number of schools are offering breakfast free of charge to all students, and some offer lunch free of charge.

The federal government provides reimbursement funds to a school for each breakfast and lunch it provides to students in each category. During the 2011-2012 school year, schools received \$1.51 for each free breakfast, \$1.21 for each reduced-price breakfast (families could be charged a maximum co-payment of 30 cents), and \$0.27 for each paid breakfast served. Schools received an additional \$0.29 for each free and reduced-price breakfast served if at least 40 percent of the lunches served in that school during the second preceding school year were free or reduced-price. (These are called “severe need” schools.)

Most children are certified for free or reduced-price meals via applications collected by the school district each year. However, children in households participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), as well as foster youth, migrant, homeless, or runaway youth, and Head Start participants are automatically eligible for free school meals without the need for an application, and are therefore included in a group referred to as “categorically eligible students.” School districts are required to directly certify children in SNAP participant households for free school meals through data matching of SNAP records with school enrollment lists, and have the option of directly certifying children in TANF and FDPIR households as well. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) does a notable job directly certifying households for free and reduced-priced meals, matching school enrollment records with SNAP and TANF databases seven times throughout the year.

Breakfast Terms

- Universal breakfast: All children are offered breakfast free of charge, regardless of family income.
- Provision 2: A federal option designed to reduce paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meal programs. In Baltimore City – which uses Provision 2 for breakfast – and other Provision 2 jurisdictions, school meal applications are collected in the initial base year to establish a fixed federal reimbursement percentage for the following three years based on the percentage of free and reduced-price meals served in the base year. For the three years that are not a base year, Provision 2 schools do not have to collect and process school meals applications, keep track of meal categories, or conduct verifications.
- Community Eligibility Option (CEO) - Community Eligibility is the newest tool for schools with high percentages of low-income students to provide breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students. Schools that take advantage of CEO do not need to collect school meal benefit applications. Instead, the school’s reimbursement is calculated from a formula that is based on direct certification data. The percentage of students that are directly certified in a school is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the percent of meals that are reimbursed to a school at the “free” rate, and the rest is reimbursed at the “paid” rate. Maryland was selected by the USDA to pilot CEO in Baltimore City Public Schools, Washington County Public Schools, and the SEED School in the 2013-2014 school year. There are several benefits to CEO: burdensome paperwork is eliminated, administrative costs are reduced, school meal service is streamlined, and all students receive all meals at no charge. CEO will be available to all schools nationwide in the 2014-2015 school year.

Alternative Delivery Models

- Breakfast in the classroom: All children are offered breakfast in their classroom, either at the beginning of the school day or early during the school day.
- Grab-and-go: Children can grab all the components of school breakfast quickly and easily from the cafeteria line or from carts or kiosks elsewhere on school grounds and eat in the classroom or another location outside of the cafeteria.
- Second-chance breakfast: Offers students a second chance to obtain and eat breakfast after homeroom or first period.

Key Findings for the 2011-2012 School Year

- More than half—51.3—of low-income Maryland children participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 who participated in the National School Lunch Program on an average day—an increase of 4.5 students per 100 from the previous school year, when the ratio was 46.8:100. For the first time, Maryland ranks above the national average ratio, which was 50.4:100 in 2011-2012.
- All 24 jurisdictions in Maryland had an increase in the number of low-income students eating school breakfast in the 2011-2012 school year, with percentage increases in the number of students ranging from 0.8 percent in Worcester County to 36.6 percent in Howard County. Currently, three jurisdictions—Somerset, Kent, and Dorchester counties—surpassed the goal of reaching 70 low-income students eating breakfast for every 100 eating school lunch.
- Participation in breakfast varied widely from county to county: Somerset County reached an extraordinary high of 98.4 low-income students participating in school breakfast for every 100 who participate in school lunch, while Howard County reached only 27.8 low-income students participating in school breakfast for every 100 who participate in school lunch.
- Four of the five most populous jurisdictions (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties) had significant increases in school breakfast participation—with gains of 20.4, 18.8, 16.6, and 20 percent in the number of students eating breakfast, respectively. Baltimore City’s increase was modest by comparison, with just a 5.4 percent gain in school breakfast participation. Additionally, Anne Arundel and Prince George’s counties had rates above the state average (51.3:100) at 52.2 and 52.7 per 100, respectively. Baltimore and Montgomery counties and Baltimore City continued to have rates below the state average—48.8, 49.3, and 46.6 per 100, respectively.
- Maryland is failing to serve 48,634 low-income children and missing out on \$12,943,493 in federal reimbursements by falling below the goal of increasing statewide participation in the School Breakfast Program to 70 low-income children eating breakfast for every 100 who eat school lunch.
- Maryland jurisdictions with widespread support for—and implementation of—alternative breakfast delivery models as part of the school day demonstrated the most significant increases in school breakfast participation.

Introduction

Maryland has the highest median household income in the country, yet 13.5 percent of Maryland children lived below the federal poverty line (FPL) in 2011, and half of these children were living in “extreme poverty” – in households at or below 50 percent of the FPL.¹ Poor and near-poor households struggle with food insufficiency: 20.8 percent of Maryland households with children had difficulty affording enough food to feed their family during 2009-2010.² With the unemployment rate averaging just under 7 percent in Maryland in 2012,^{3,4} many Maryland families are struggling to locate family-supporting jobs.⁵

Although the economy is slowly recovering from the Great Recession, the number of Maryland students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals rose in 23 of 24 jurisdictions in the 2011-2012 school year compared to the 2010-2011 school year. Only Garrett County had a decrease in free and reduced-price meal enrollment, with a 2 percent decline. Statewide, 358,373 children were enrolled in the free and reduced-price meal program in 2011-2012—an increase of 14,804, or 4.3 percent, over the 2010-2011 school year. The increased need for free and

2011-2012 School Year Participation in the School Breakfast Program, and Additional Funding Possible if the Goal of 70 Free and Reduced-Price Students in the School Breakfast Program per 100 in the National School Lunch Program is Reached

Jurisdictions	F&RP NSLP Students	F&RP SBP Students	F&RP Students in SBP per 100 NSLP	Rank	Additional Low-Income Students in Breakfast if 70 per 100 in Lunch	Additional Federal Funding if 70 Low-Income Breakfast Students per 100 Receiving Lunch
ALLEGANY	3,752	2,462	65.6	7	164	\$40,737
ANNE ARUNDEL	15,463	8,076	52.2	14	2,748	\$728,982
BALTIMORE	34,155	16,653	48.8	18	7,256	\$1,937,182
CALVERT	2,314	912	39.4	22	708	\$190,001
CAROLINE	2,382	1,376	57.8	10	292	\$77,753
CARROLL	3,271	1,271	38.8	23	1,019	\$271,002
CECIL	4,566	3,028	66.3	5	168	\$44,434
CHARLES	5,949	3,104	52.2	15	1,061	\$277,948
DORCHESTER	2,187	1,641	75.0	3	0	\$0
FREDERICK	6,535	3,064	46.9	19	1,511	\$394,076
GARRETT	1,549	1,044	67.4	4	40	\$10,358
HARFORD	8,183	4,569	55.8	12	1,159	\$306,295
HOWARD	6,834	1,897	27.8	24	2,887	\$767,790
KENT	912	793	87.0	2	0	\$0
MONTGOMERY	35,219	17,363	49.3	17	7,291	\$1,956,080
PRINCE GEORGE'S	54,266	28,583	52.7	13	9,403	\$2,516,189
QUEEN ANNE'S	1,337	554	41.4	21	382	\$97,906
ST MARY'S	3,809	2,339	61.4	9	328	\$87,550
SOMERSET	1,393	1,370	98.4	1	0	\$0
TALBOT	1,302	675	51.9	16	236	\$62,121
WASHINGTON	7,567	5,013	66.2	6	284	\$76,079
WICOMICO	6,133	3,447	56.2	11	846	\$219,885
WORCESTER	2,027	1,315	64.9	8	104	\$26,667
BALTIMORE CITY	45,908	21,388	46.6	20	10,747	\$2,854,458
Total	257,013	131,936	51.3	NA	48,634	\$12,943,493

reduced-price meals over the past five years can be seen in the 26 percent increase in such enrollment from 2007-2008, when 284,448 students were enrolled.

As Maryland families living in or near poverty continue to struggle to meet their basic needs and provide adequate, nutritious food for their children, reliable sources of healthy meals—like the School Breakfast Program—are more important than ever. Children are best equipped to learn and achieve at school when they start their day with a healthy meal. Research has linked participation in the School Breakfast Program with improvements in students’ math and reading scores; improvements in speed and memory in cognitive tests; and improvements in ability to perform on standardized tests when compared with students who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.⁶ Additionally, schools report that when students start their day with school breakfast, there are fewer problems with discipline and tardiness; fewer visits to the school nurse; and increases in student attendance and attentiveness.⁷

This report analyzes school breakfast participation in Maryland for the 2011-2012 school year. For the first time, in that year, over 50 percent of Maryland’s low-income children who were eating school lunch were eating school breakfast. In the 2011-2012 school year, there were an additional 16,607 low-income children per day participating in the School Breakfast Program when compared to the 2010-2011 school year (and 10,550 additional low-income children participating in the National School Lunch Program). Additionally, all 24 Maryland jurisdictions experienced an increase in their breakfast participation in the 2011-2012 school year.

Yet, despite an overall increase in school breakfast participation, Maryland continues to fall short of reaching the target goal of 70 low-income children participating in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 in the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, the state is missing out on \$12,943,493 in federal reimbursements because of this shortfall in participation. Given both the demonstrated need and the potential benefits, Maryland must continue to make increasing participation in the School Breakfast Program a priority.

In ensuing sections we will discuss the current state of breakfast participation in Maryland, highlight successful strategies that counties are implementing to increase their breakfast participation, and note where there is still room for growth to ensure that all children in Maryland have the opportunity to start their school day with a healthy breakfast.

Most Populous Jurisdictions Moving Forward—But More Remains to Be Done

Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of children in Maryland attend school in one of the five most populous jurisdictions in the state: Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties. To end childhood hunger in Maryland, it is critical to reach low-income children in these counties.

Four of these five counties had significant increases in school breakfast participation during the 2011-2012 school year when compared to 2010-2011—increases that can be directly traced to strong leadership by school administrators, as well as to the implementation of alternative breakfast delivery models. Prince George’s and Anne Arundel counties had 20 percent increases in breakfast participation, Baltimore County had an 18.8 percent increase, Montgomery County had a 16.6 percent increase, while Baltimore City had a 5.4 percent increase.

Students Participating in SBP in the Most Populous Jurisdictions | 2011-2012 School Year

County	Number of Children eating breakfast	Ratio as compared to lunch participation	Percent change in breakfast participation from 2010-2011 SY
Prince George's	28,583	52.7	20%
Anne Arundel	8,076	52.2	20.4%
Montgomery	17,363	49.3	16.6%
Baltimore	16,653	48.8	18.8%
Baltimore City	21,388	46.6	5.4%

Yet, even with large increases in breakfast participation during the 2011-2012 school year, three of these five jurisdictions—Montgomery, Baltimore, and Baltimore City—were still below the state average of 51.3 children eating free or reduced-price breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, and below the national average of 50.4. Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties had participation ratios above the state and national average. While progress is being made in these heavily populated jurisdictions, there is still much room for improvement and specific steps that can be taken to achieve it.

Baltimore City has one of the lowest median area incomes in the country at \$38,721, and more than one in four Baltimore City residents live below the federal poverty line.⁸ Consequently, Baltimore City has the highest rate of free and reduced-price meal eligibility in Maryland, with 83.4 percent of students enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools qualifying for free and reduced-price meals. Yet, while Baltimore City has both the highest rate of childhood poverty in the state (one in three children live in households that fall below the federal poverty line) and the fourth-largest population, it ranked in Maryland's bottom five for school breakfast participation during the 2011-2012 school year, with only 46.6 low-income children eating school breakfast for every 100 that eat lunch. Baltimore City was also in the bottom five during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, the first years that Maryland Hunger Solutions began compiling breakfast reports. It progressed out of the bottom five during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, only to slip back during the 2011-2012 school year as other jurisdictions had greater increases in breakfast participation.

Baltimore City has experienced some increases in breakfast participation, but it is progressing at a much slower rate than other jurisdictions in Maryland and has failed to keep pace with the four other most populous jurisdictions in Maryland during the 2011-2012 school year. And by failing to reach the goal of 70 students participating in breakfast for every 100 participating in lunch, the jurisdiction lost out on \$2,854,458 in federal reimbursements.

Given this clear need for higher participation rates in the school breakfast program, Baltimore City must follow the examples set by the four other populous jurisdictions that are having success with their alternative breakfast delivery models. As Baltimore City's high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals makes it much more feasible for the district to provide breakfast for free to all students, there exists a solid foundation to implement alternative breakfast district-wide. Strong leadership from all levels of the school system – including hiring a full-time, permanent food service director and a commitment to alternative breakfast delivery models – would allow Baltimore City to dramatically increase breakfast participation.

Notably, Baltimore City continues to participate in the First Class Breakfast Initiative, a project of the Governor's Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, and has hired a full-time breakfast coordinator to oversee the transition of schools from the traditional cafeteria-based breakfast model to alternative breakfast delivery models. As part of the second phase of the First Class Breakfast Initiative, members of the Governor's Partnership, including Maryland Hunger Solutions and Share Our Strength, have been working to provide technical assistance and start-up breakfast grants to numerous schools during the 2012-2013 school year with the expectation of implementing alternative breakfast models in 70 additional schools during this second phase. Baltimore City Public Schools will likely significantly increase its school breakfast participation once alternative delivery breakfast programs are implemented successfully in the 70 schools. Additionally, an assessment team was hired to study ways to improve food and nutrition services in Baltimore City Public Schools and a report is expected to be released in June 2013. Baltimore City may well be on the verge of dramatically increasing the number of its students that start the day with a nutritious breakfast—a vital step in reducing hunger among the state's most vulnerable children and in supporting their academic achievement.

Breakfast Participation Continues to Soar in Rural Counties

The top five Maryland jurisdictions in free and reduced-price school breakfast participation as compared to school lunch participation are rural counties: Somerset (98.4:100), Kent (87:100), Dorchester (75:100), Garrett (67.4:100), and Cecil (66.3:100). During the 2011-2012 school year, Maryland saw the greatest success in combating childhood hunger through the School Breakfast Program in less populous, rural counties, just as it did during the 2010-2011 school year. Garrett and Cecil counties moved into the top five for free and reduced-price school breakfast participation, with 18.7 and 17.4 percent increases in the number of students eating breakfast, respectively. Notably, eight of the nine counties in Maryland with 10,000 or fewer students enrolled in their public schools—Somerset, Kent, Dorchester, Garrett, Talbot, Caroline, Worcester, and Allegany—were above the state average in breakfast participation (Queen Anne's County is the exception, with 41.4 low-income children eating school breakfast for every 100 eating lunch). Caroline County in particular had dramatic increases in its breakfast participation, rising from 48.2 low-income children eating school breakfast per 100 eating lunch in the 2010-2011 school year to 57.8 in the 2011-2012 school year.

Maryland Meals for Achievement a Boost to Rural Counties

Strong breakfast participation in these rural counties is assisted by widespread participation in the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) Program. Maryland Meals for Achievement is a state-funded program that helps support free breakfast-in-the-classroom for all students in schools that have at least 40 percent or more of student enrollment approved for free or reduced-priced meals. Eligible schools can apply to become an MMFA school and receive state funds to cover a proportion of meal costs not covered by federal reimbursements.⁹

By allowing all students to receive a free school breakfast in the classroom regardless of family income, MMFA reduces the stigma attached to students qualifying for free and reduced-price school meals. Additionally, offering breakfast in the classroom allows more students to participate by reducing the challenges posed by complicated morning family commuting schedules, late bus schedules, and early school start times. A 2001 evaluation of MMFA conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education confirmed the program's positive outcomes, including a 5 percent increase in the number of students scoring at or above satisfactory levels on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program Composite Index; an 8 percent decline in tardiness; a 46 percent decrease in suspension length; and a 72 percent average increase in breakfast participation in participating schools that school

2011-2012 Maryland Meals for Achievement Program

Jurisdictions	Total Number of Schools in District	Number of Schools Eligible for MMFA	Number of Schools Participating in MMFA	Percent of Schools Eligible for MMFA	Percent of Eligible Schools Participating in MMFA	Percent of All Schools Participating in MMFA
ALLEGANY	24	20	10	83.33%	50%	41.67%
ANNE ARUNDEL	120	42	22	35.00%	52%	18.33%
BALTIMORE	167	102	28	61.08%	27%	16.77%
CALVERT	24	5	0	20.83%	0%	0.00%
CAROLINE	11	11	5	100.00%	45%	45.00%
CARROLL	44	4	3	9.09%	75%	6.82%
CECIL	30	14	10	46.67%	71%	33.33%
CHARLES	37	11	6	29.73%	55%	16.22%
DORCHESTER	13	11	8	84.62%	73%	61.54%
FREDERICK	65	13	7	20.00%	54%	10.77%
GARRETT	15	12	8	80.00%	67%	53.33%
HARFORD	54	17	9	31.48%	53%	16.67%
HOWARD	73	8	3	10.96%	38%	4.11%
KENT	7	6	5	85.71%	83%	71.43%
MONTGOMERY	207	80	32	38.65%	40%	15.46%
PRINCE GEORGE'S	200	156	21	78.00%	13%	10.50%
QUEEN ANNE'S	15	4	2	26.67%	50%	13.33%
ST. MARY'S	26	7	7	26.92%	100%	26.92%
SOMERSET	9	8	5	88.89%	63%	55.56%
TALBOT	10	4	2	40.00%	50%	20.00%
WASHINGTON	47	27	20	57.45%	74%	42.55%
WICOMICO	26	21	6	80.77%	29%	23.08%
WORCESTER	15	12	6	80.00%	50%	40.00%
BALTIMORE CITY	202	195	7	96.53%	4%	3.47%
Total	1441	790	232	47.10%	29%	13.30%

year.¹⁰ For the 2011-2012 school year, the average breakfast participation in MMFA schools was 69 percent of low-income lunch participation.¹¹

Kent, Dorchester, Somerset, and Garrett counties have the highest percentages of schools participating in the MMFA program, at 71, 62, 56, and 54 percent, respectively. MMFA has provided a big boost in these top-performing counties. Unfortunately, due to the limited state funding of MMFA, statewide during the 2011-2012 school year only 232 of the 790 schools eligible for MMFA, or just 29 percent, were participating in the program. Although the number of schools eligible for MMFA has increased every year, MMFA's reach has been continually

hampered by low funding. Many of the eligible but non-participating schools are in the five largest jurisdictions: Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince's George's counties. If more schools in these counties have the opportunity to participate in MMFA, it would have a significant impact on the overall breakfast participation rate in Maryland.

Anti-hunger advocates are working to address the funding shortfall for MMFA. Maryland Hunger Solutions, along with other partners, advocated for Governor Martin O'Malley to increase funding for MMFA in his fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget, and to commit to fully fund the program by FY 2018. Governor O'Malley did include a \$1.8 million increase in MMFA in his FY 2014 budget. This increase will allow 57,000 more children to have access to a healthy breakfast in the classroom every morning. The Governor's \$37 billion dollar budget – including the increase in MMFA funding – was passed by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2013 session. Now, it is critically important for the Governor, Maryland General Assembly, and the state to commit to fully fund this effective program in coming years.

Breakfast Success in Counties Embracing Alternative Delivery Models

Many jurisdictions in Maryland have recognized the value of making breakfast part of the school day – through MMFA and through other means – and have successfully embraced alternative delivery school breakfast models. These jurisdictions have benefitted from a number of publicly – and privately – funded programs that have come to Maryland, including Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom, the First Class Breakfast Initiative, and Hunger-Free Communities (described in more detail later in this report). In addition, the leadership and support of the Governors' Partnership to End Childhood Hunger and its members – including the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Hunger Solutions, and Share Our Strength – have contributed to the growth in this school breakfast approach in Maryland in 2011-2012.

Prince George's County Sees Dramatic Gains Using Alternative Breakfast Models

In 2011-2012, Prince George's County had the second-highest total student enrollment and highest free and reduced-price meal enrollment in Maryland, with 71,506 students eligible for the free and reduced-price meal program. Recognizing the significant need in its community, Prince George's County committed to expanding school breakfast participation, and the result was a real success story for the 2011-2012 school year. Prince George's County officials – including the superintendent of schools, the chief of student services, and the director of food and nutrition services – dedicated themselves to reaching more children with a nutritious breakfast. Their strong commitment to widespread implementation of alternative delivery models fostered successful partnerships that substantially increased breakfast participation in Prince George's County.

During the 2010-2011 school year, only 44.3 low-income children in Prince George's County were eating school breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, below the state average of 46.8. That was virtually unchanged from five years ago, when Maryland Hunger Solutions first started reporting on breakfast participation, and the rate was 43.51:100. Prince George's County then saw an impressive 20 percent increase in breakfast participation during the 2011-2012 school year, resulting in 52.7 low-income children eating breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, above the state average of 51.3. Overall, 28,583 low-income children ate school breakfast in Prince George's County Public Schools – the highest number of children eating breakfast in any jurisdiction in the state (and an increase from the 23,809 children eating breakfast daily in the 2010-2011 school year). Consequently, Prince

George’s County accounts for more than one-fifth, or 21.7 percent, of the 131,936 Maryland children participating in the school breakfast program.

What propelled these strong increases in breakfast participation was Prince George’s County’s investment in alternative breakfast delivery models. Nationally, schools are increasing School Breakfast Program participation by offering students alternative ways to obtain and consume breakfast during the school day, and Prince George’s County has taken advantage of opportunities to implement this best practice in its own school system.¹²

Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year and continuing into 2011-2012, Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom – a collaboration among the Food Research and Action Center, the National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation, the National Education Association Health Information Network, and the School Nutrition Foundation, with funding from the Walmart Foundation and support from Maryland Hunger Solutions – worked with Prince George’s County Public Schools to introduce breakfast in the classroom in 21 schools with many low-income students. The project also worked to build broad support in the district for breakfast in the classroom among district leadership, principals, teachers, and community members. All students in the participating schools were offered breakfast free of charge, regardless of household income. The project’s funding covered start-up costs. On an ongoing basis, when schools serving low-income populations offer free breakfast to all, significantly more students participate, increasing federal reimbursements, which creates an economy of scale that allows the school to provide breakfast free to all students without losing money. The 21 schools implemented breakfast in the classroom over the course of the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years, and during that time they increased their breakfast participation by an average of 145 percent. Before implementation of breakfast in the classroom in the 21 schools, the combined average daily participation in school breakfast was 3,528 children. After implementation, the average daily participation increased to 8,659 students for the 2011-2012 school year.

Average Daily Participation in Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) Schools (Date of implementation varied by school)			
School Name	Before BIC 2010-2011 SY	After BIC 2011-2012 SY	Increase in Number of Children Participating
Adelphi	100	258	158
Beacon Heights	94	253	159
Buck Lodge MS	228	484	256
Carrollton	129	501	372
Cesar Chavez	61	222	161
Cherokee Lane	150	260	110
Dodge Park	155	303	148
Gladys Noon Spellman	222	415	193
Glenridge	380	609	229
Lamont	200	435	235
Langley Park McCormick	128	420	292
Lewisdale	106	390	284
Port Town	144	700	556
Riverdale	106	517	411
Rogers Heights	183	535	352
Rosa Parks	200	412	212
Springhill Lakes	260	427	167
Templeton	274	481	207
Thomas Stone	201	504	303
William Paca	144	361	217
Woodridge	63	172	109

Additionally, Prince George's County participated in the First Class Breakfast Initiative, a project of the Governor's Partnership to End Childhood Hunger. That initiative also assists schools in adopting alternative breakfast models, including breakfast in the classroom, grab-and-go breakfast, and second-chance breakfast. During the 2010-2011 school year, Maryland Hunger Solutions targeted three schools in Prince George's County and helped them secure start-up materials and implement alternative delivery models. An additional 25 schools were targeted during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years by Maryland Hunger Solutions and Share Our Strength in the second phase of the First Class Breakfast Initiative, but alternative delivery models were not implemented in these schools until 2012-2013. Additional gains in these schools should be apparent in next year's report analyzing participation for the 2012-2013 school year.

Taken together, the impact of these efforts to advance alternative breakfast delivery models is evident in the increase in breakfast participation reflected in Prince George's County's 2011-2012 school year data as a whole. Prince George's County should be an example to other Maryland jurisdictions – particularly those with disproportionate numbers of families living in or near poverty – that investment in alternative breakfast delivery models is a proven way to quickly increase breakfast participation. While work remains to reach the goal of 70 low-income students participating in breakfast for every 100 participating in lunch – which would bring \$2,516,189 in additional federal reimbursements into the school systems – Prince George's County has made great strides to end childhood hunger through school breakfast expansion.

Hunger-Free Communities a Catalyst for Breakfast Success

In spring 2011, the Governor's Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland was awarded a two-year, almost \$1 million Hunger-Free Communities (HFC) implementation grant through the Food and Nutrition Services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goal of the grant was to significantly reduce hunger and improve nutrition by connecting more Marylanders to federal nutrition programs, with a focus on eight counties: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Caroline, Carroll, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, and Montgomery.

Maryland Hunger Solutions adopted a county-by-county approach to expanding the federal nutrition programs, including school breakfast, through this project. Employing a dedicated nutrition associate staff position and extensive collaboration with community- and state-level partners, Maryland Hunger Solutions pinpointed unique barriers, identified the community and faith-based partners committed to ending hunger, and developed the most effective and sustainable model for program implementation in each county. For the School Breakfast Program, Maryland Hunger Solutions worked closely with the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems to promote proven strategies to increase participation, such as serving school breakfast in the classroom or other convenient locations to remove barriers that commonly prevent children from participating.

This systematic work to expand breakfast participation (and participation in other child nutrition programs) in the eight Hunger-Free Community counties produced impressive results. Allegany (65.6), Anne Arundel (52.2), Caroline (57.8), Dorchester (75.0), and Garrett Counties (67.4) all exceeded the state average (51.3) in the number of low-income children eating school breakfast relative to the school lunch participation. These numbers are also significantly higher than the participation rates from the 2009-2010 school year in these counties before the Hunger-Free Communities grant, when the numbers were 60.5, 45.9, 44.8, 68.0, and 53.8, respectively. Although breakfast participation in Carroll and Montgomery counties was lower than the state average during the 2011-2012 school year, these two counties did see significant increases in the numbers of

participating students compared to the 2010-2011 school year, at 16.8 and 16.6 percent, respectively. Strong leadership by food and nutrition service directors and staff, along with school administrators, created a collaborative environment which fostered the expansion of alternative breakfast delivery models in these counties. In the eighth county, Frederick County, the public schools have had a long-standing reluctance to embrace and promote widespread alternative breakfast delivery models, and that has shown up in the county losing ground compared to other Hunger-Free Community counties.

The success in these Hunger-Free Community counties demonstrates that targeted work, outreach and funding for school breakfast promotion and alternative breakfast delivery models produce real increases in breakfast participation. These counties are examples to other jurisdictions—large and small, urban, suburban, and rural—that a clear focus on implementing reforms in breakfast delivery will increase the number of low-income children in Maryland starting the day with a healthy breakfast.

Spotlight on Success in Charles County

Charles County Public Schools are also a school breakfast leader in Maryland, demonstrating that strong administrative support, coupled with alternative breakfast delivery models, leads to dramatic increases in participation. When Maryland Hunger Solutions started tracking breakfast participation in the 2007-2008 school year, Charles County was one of the bottom five jurisdictions in the state, with 32 low-income children eating breakfast per 100 eating lunch. By the 2011-2012 school year, Charles County had climbed above the state average in breakfast participation, with a rate of 52.2.

Led by the county supervisors of food service who strongly support increasing access to school breakfast, Charles County Food and Nutrition Services made a concerted effort to push for widespread implementation of alternative breakfast delivery models in their schools. At Henry E. Lackey High School, for instance, implementation of second-chance breakfast between second- and third-period classes has led to an increase in breakfast participation, and the school now serves more than 300 students a day—a 200 percent increase from breakfast participation rates before the second-chance breakfast was introduced. Charles County teachers and administrations attribute the incorporation of breakfast as part of the school day with decreases in classroom disruptions and increased student engagement. Due to the success of alternative breakfast delivery models, Charles County is planning to expand their implementation to all schools in Charles County.

Affluence and Need in Howard County

With a median household income of \$98,953, Howard County is the wealthiest county in the nation's wealthiest state. Yet, Howard County experienced one of the greatest increases in free and reduced-price meal eligibility in the state, with 10.7 percent more children enrolled in the free and reduced-price meal program in the 2011-2012 school year compared to the previous school year. Howard County also saw the greatest percentage increase between the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years in the number of low-income children eating free and reduced-price breakfast, at 36.6 percent.

During the 2011-2012 school year, three Howard County schools participated in the First-Class Breakfast Initiative. Between February 2010 and May 2012, each school experienced dramatic gains, with breakfast participation increasing by over 300 percent. One school, Phelps Luck Elementary, increased its breakfast participation by 927 percent. As these figures demonstrate, alternative breakfast models work in Howard County.

Despite these initial successes, Howard County has not implemented alternative breakfast delivery models on a wide scale. While Howard County's need for free and reduced-price school meals is increasing, the county still had the lowest breakfast participation rate in the state, at 27.8 low-income children eating breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, and it lagged the rest of the state by a large margin – only two other counties were below 40:100. Families in every Maryland county continue to struggle to make ends meet. Traditionally affluent counties like Howard County must make increasing participation in school breakfast programs a priority to ensure their children start the day with the nutritious meal they need to bolster their academic achievement.

Recommendations

The School Breakfast Program is a proven way to ameliorate childhood hunger, as well as to improve health, test scores, attendance, and behavior. It reduces household food costs, so that fewer families living in or near the federal poverty line have to make tough choices between food and rent or food and utilities. Moreover, higher levels of breakfast participation translate into higher levels of federal reimbursements, enabling Maryland to continue expanding and improving school nutrition programs.

Maryland can significantly increase breakfast participation by taking the following steps:

- **Make school breakfast more accessible through alternative delivery models.**

Maryland Meals for Achievement, Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom, and the First Class Breakfast Initiative demonstrate that by making breakfast part of the school day through the implementation of alternative delivery models, more students who need breakfast will participate in the School Breakfast Program. Alternative delivery models eliminate barriers to participation, including stigma, transportation difficulties, bus schedules and delays, and school schedules, allowing more students to start the day well-nourished and ready to learn.

- **Increase funding for Maryland Meals for Achievement to expand the program.**

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) results in consistently higher breakfast participation, increased student academic achievement, and improved student behavior. Maryland Hunger Solutions applauds Governor Martin O'Malley for including a \$1.8 million dollar increase for MMFA in his FY 2014 budget, and the Maryland General Assembly for passing a budget that maintained the increase in MMFA funding. We urge the state to fully fund MMFA by FY 2018 so all eligible schools can participate, and so all children in these schools can benefit from this critical program.

- **Encourage the five largest jurisdictions to reach more students and continue to implement alternative delivery models.**

Maryland will only make headway in the fight to end childhood hunger by reaching the greatest possible number of vulnerable children, the large majority of whom reside in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties. Until these five jurisdictions reach more than 70 percent of students participating in free and reduced-price lunch, too many Maryland students will miss out on the benefits of the School Breakfast Program.

- **Take advantage of Community Eligibility.**

Community Eligibility is the newest federal option for offering free meals to all students in a school. When 40 percent or more of a school's students are directly certified without an application to receive free school meals (because the child's household receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits—food stamps—or

participates in TANF or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or the child is homeless, migrant, or in foster care), that school may use a formula based on its direct certification rate as the basis for reimbursements, instead of relying on individual paper applications. As discussed throughout this report, offering free breakfast to all students creates the best foundation for operating alternative school breakfast models, thus, dramatically breakfast participation. Community Eligibility makes this approach easier. Entire jurisdictions, a cluster of schools, or individual schools may be able to take advantage of Community Eligibility to streamline their processes, maximize federal reimbursement, and increase the number of low-income students receiving school meals.

Maryland applied to the USDA – and was selected – to be one of four states to pilot the Community Eligibility Option (CEO) during the 2013-2014 school year. Next year, it is expected that CEO will be implemented in Baltimore City Public Schools, Washington County Public Schools, and the SEED School. If these local education agencies move forward with CEO, all students in these jurisdictions would be able to receive a healthy breakfast and lunch at no charge to their families each day during the 2013-2014 school year. This is a great opportunity, and one that can be built upon in future school years in other Maryland jurisdictions as CEO will be available to all states and all local education agencies during the 2014-2015 school year.

- **Continue to promote the School Breakfast Program.**

State and local jurisdictions should promote the School Breakfast Program year round, utilizing every available means of communication to remind parents about the benefits of the School Breakfast Program: handouts in students' backpacks, reminders included with report cards, announcements at PTA meetings and back-to-school nights, Connect-Ed automated messages, and notices to local school-community workgroups.

- **Plan ahead for nutrition quality changes in the 2013-2014 school year pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.**

Under the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and corresponding regulations, school systems will need to meet new school breakfast nutrition guidelines over a two-year period beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. Schools will be changing menus and offering healthier options, including more fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Maryland schools can involve students in taste-testing new breakfast foods now, and incorporating their feedback on new menu items will engage students in healthy eating habits. Students will be even more likely to eat breakfast at school if they have the opportunity to assist in choosing new, healthier menu items.

Conclusion

It's an old adage, but for Maryland's low-income children, it couldn't be truer: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It can make a real difference when it comes to student health, well-being, and academic performance. Yet, when only 51 low-income children in Maryland are eating breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, it is imperative that more be done to increase breakfast participation. Statewide investment in alternative breakfast delivery models will increase breakfast participation and overall student health, and further strengthen student achievement, while also receiving additional federal reimbursement dollars to reinvest in schools. Ending childhood hunger in Maryland isn't an unrealistic goal. When Maryland counties take the concrete steps that improve school breakfast participation, it becomes a more achievable one. Let's take those steps now.

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Technical Notes

The data in this report are collected from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Student participation data for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years are based on daily averages of the number of breakfasts and lunches served during August through June of each year, as provided by MSDE. Due to rounding, totals in the tables may not add up to 100 percent. This report utilizes district-level data.

This report utilizes the 2011-2012 USDA reimbursement rates for the School Breakfast Program:

Category	Non-Severe Need School	Severe Need School*	Price of Meals to Children
Free	\$1.51	\$1.80	\$0
Reduced-Price	\$1.21	\$1.50	\$0.30 (max. a school can charge)
Paid	\$0.27	\$0.27	Varies

*Schools with greater than 40 percent of their students purchasing free or reduced-price lunches qualify as severe need. An additional \$0.29 for each free and reduced price breakfast is reimbursed.

Endnotes

¹ Children's Defense Fund. Children in Maryland. 2012.

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-data-repository/cits/2012/2012-maryland-children-in-the-states.pdf>

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⁷ Food Research and Action Center. Breakfast in the Classroom Fact Sheet. http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/universal_classroom_breakfast_fact_sheet.pdf

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⁸ Census

⁹ Maryland State Department of Education. *Meals for Achievement*. http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/meals_achieve.htm?WBCMODE=Ppercent25percent25percent25percent25percent25percent25percent3epercent0dpercent25percent3epercent25percent3e

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¹⁰ Murphy, J., et al. *Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report*, October 2001. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED460784.pdf>

¹¹ Data from MSDE

¹² Food Research and Action Center. *School Breakfast: Making it Work in Large School Districts*. Washington, D.C. January 2013.

2011-2012 School Year Free and Reduced-Price (F&RP) School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program Participation

Jurisdictions	2010-2011 School Year			Rank	2011-2012 School Year			Rank	Change in Ratio	Change in Free and Reduced-Price SBP Students	% Change in Free and Reduced-Price SBP
	Free and Reduced-Price NSLP Students	Free and Reduced-Price SBP Students	Free and Reduced-Price Students in SBP per 100 NSLP		Free and Reduced-Price NSLP Students	Free and Reduced-Price SBP Students	Free and Reduced-Price Students in SBP per 100 NSLP				
ALLEGANY	3,730	2,267	60.8	6	3,752	2,462	65.6	7	4.83	195	8.6%
ANNE ARUNDEL	14,296	6,710	46.9	14	15,463	8,076	52.2	14	5.26	1,366	20.4%
BALTIMORE	31,999	14,023	43.8	19	34,155	16,653	48.8	18	4.98	2,630	18.8%
CALVERT	2,223	849	38.2	22	2,314	912	39.4	22	1.21	63	7.4%
CAROLINE	2,249	1,084	48.2	13	2,382	1,376	57.8	10	9.58	292	26.9%
CARROLL	3,022	1,088	36.0	23	3,271	1,271	38.8	23	2.80	183	16.8%
CECIL	4,409	2,580	58.5	7	4,566	3,028	66.3	5	7.79	448	17.4%
CHARLES	5,706	2,476	43.4	20	5,949	3,104	52.2	15	8.81	628	25.4%
DORCHESTER	2,120	1,469	69.3	3	2,187	1,641	75.0	3	5.68	172	11.7%
FREDERICK	6,492	3,006	46.3	15	6,535	3,064	46.9	19	0.60	58	1.9%
GARRETT	1,550	879	56.7	9	1,549	1,044	67.4	4	10.67	165	18.7%
HARFORD	8,020	3,956	49.3	12	8,183	4,569	55.8	12	6.47	613	15.5%
HOWARD	6,300	1,389	22.0	24	6,834	1,897	27.8	24	5.75	508	36.6%
KENT	863	722	83.7	2	912	793	87.0	2	3.31	71	9.8%
MONTGOMERY	33,056	14,892	45.0	17	35,219	17,363	49.3	17	4.25	2,471	16.6%
PRINCE GEORGE'S	53,687	23,809	44.3	18	54,266	28,583	52.7	13	8.35	4,774	20.0%
QUEEN ANNE'S	1,273	534	41.9	21	1,337	554	41.4	21	-0.50	20	3.7%
ST MARY'S	3,639	2,078	57.1	8	3,809	2,339	61.4	9	4.29	261	12.5%
SOMERSET	1,296	1,250	96.5	1	1,393	1,370	98.4	1	1.90	120	9.6%
TALBOT	1,221	639	52.3	11	1,302	675	51.9	16	-0.44	36	5.6%
WASHINGTON	7,513	4,784	63.7	4	7,567	5,013	66.2	6	2.52	229	4.8%
WICOMICO	5,746	3,250	56.6	10	6,133	3,447	56.2	11	-0.35	197	6.1%
WORCESTER	2,057	1,305	63.4	5	2,027	1,315	64.9	8	1.46	10	0.8%
BALTIMORE CITY	43,994	20,288	46.1	16	45,908	21,388	46.6	20	0.49	1,100	5.4%
Total	246,463	115,329	46.8	NA	257,013	131,936	51.3	NA	4.51	16,607	14.4%

2011-2012 SY Free and Reduced-Price (F&RP) Meal Total Enrollment

Jurisdictions	2010-2011 School Year			2011-2012 School Year			Change in Enrollment	Change in F&RP Enrollment	% Change in F&RP Enrollment
	Enrollment	F&RP Enrollment	F&RP Rate	Enrollment	F&RP Enrollment	F&RP Rate			
ALLEGANY	9,007	4,657	51.7%	8,916	4,775	53.6%	-91	118	2.5%
ANNE ARUNDEL	75,351	21,097	28.0%	76,385	22,132	29.0%	1,034	1,035	4.9%
BALTIMORE	104,309	44,108	42.3%	105,368	47,167	44.8%	1,059	3,059	6.9%
CALVERT	16,421	3,592	21.9%	16,161	3,753	23.2%	-260	161	4.5%
CAROLINE	5,673	3,030	53.4%	5,644	3,182	56.4%	-29	152	5.0%
CARROLL	27,903	4,351	15.6%	27,046	4,657	17.2%	-857	306	7.0%
CECIL	15,923	6,108	38.4%	15,890	6,575	41.4%	-33	467	7.6%
CHARLES	26,908	7,686	28.6%	26,997	7,867	29.1%	89	181	2.4%
DORCHESTER	4,720	2,829	59.9%	4,737	2,932	61.9%	17	103	3.6%
FREDERICK	40,281	9,213	22.9%	40,439	9,446	23.4%	158	233	2.5%
GARRETT	4,349	2,074	47.7%	4,226	2,033	48.1%	-123	-41	-2.0%
HARFORD	38,395	10,516	27.4%	38,222	10,523	27.5%	-173	7	0.1%
HOWARD	51,079	8,201	16.1%	51,671	9,081	17.6%	592	880	10.7%
KENT	2,199	1,083	49.2%	2,178	1,128	51.8%	-21	45	4.2%
MONTGOMERY	144,217	44,290	30.7%	146,642	47,415	32.3%	2,425	3,125	7.1%
PRINCE GEORGE'S	126,723	69,020	54.5%	124,820	71,506	57.3%	-1,903	2,486	3.6%
QUEEN ANNE'S	7,831	1,777	22.7%	7,806	1,983	25.4%	-25	206	11.6%
ST MARY'S	17,349	5,039	29.0%	17,607	5,286	30.0%	258	247	4.9%
SOMERSET	2,911	1,918	65.9%	2,897	1,924	66.4%	-14	6	0.3%
TALBOT	4,509	1,591	35.3%	4,570	1,742	38.1%	61	151	9.5%
WASHINGTON	21,633	9,781	45.2%	21,905	10,383	47.4%	272	602	6.2%
WICOMICO	14,341	7,667	53.5%	14,438	8,462	58.6%	97	795	10.4%
WORCESTER	6,821	2,813	41.2%	6,693	2,906	43.4%	-128	93	3.3%
BALTIMORE CITY	84,605	70,962	83.9%	85,484	71,297	83.4%	879	335	0.5%
Total	853,696	343,569	40.24%	857,050	358,373	41.80%	3,354	14,804	4.3%