



Testimony of

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Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Education

Hearing Regarding
Proposed Resolutions 910-A,
Calling Upon the New York State Legislature to Pass and the Governor to Sign Legislation
Supporting Breakfast in the Classroom in Every School in New York City,
and Proposed Resolution 911-A,
Calling Upon the New York City Department of Education to Support Breakfast in the
Classroom in Every School in New York City

June 20, 2012

Good afternoon. My name is Louise Feld and I am the Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 68-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chair Jackson and the members of the Committee on Education for holding this hearing today, as well as all of the New York City Council members for their continued commitment to helping our City's children and families access healthy, fresh food.

CCC supports Proposed Resolutions 910-A and 911-A, which, respectively, call upon the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo, and the New York City Board of Education, to support the Breakfast in the Classroom program (BIC) in all New York City schools. The BIC program provides in-classroom breakfast to children at the start of the school day, and is a proven way to help ensure that children eat a healthy breakfast each and every weekday morning.

In recent years, guaranteeing children's access to a nutritious breakfast at school has become even more pressing, as a staggering number of New York City's families have faced increased poverty, and an accompanying inability to consistently purchase healthy foods. According to recent U.S. Census data, in 2010 the City's child poverty rate reached 30 percent, after experiencing an overwhelming 10.8 percent growth since the previous year.¹ Also by the close of 2010, over 1.8 million New Yorkers were receiving SNAP (or "Food Stamp") assistance, including 30 percent of New York City families with children – a 53 percent increase in the share of New York City families participating in the program in a three-year period.² Finally, in 2011, almost three-quarters of New York City's over one million public school students qualified for free or reduced-price School Meals, because their families' incomes fell at or below 130 percent and 185 percent, respectively, of the federal poverty level.³

Despite this clear need, and although New York City public schools offer free breakfast to all students regardless of their income-eligibility status, New York City's school breakfast participation rates are troublingly low. Last month, CCC released *The School Breakfast Program in New York City Public Schools: Results from a Parent Survey Concerning Student Participation*, a report which details our findings from a CCC-conducted survey of New York City parents whose children were attending public elementary and middle schools.⁴ Almost 100 parents were surveyed for the project. Only 21.3 percent of parents surveyed reported that their children had eaten breakfast at school every day during the previous school week, and a quarter of survey respondents stated that their children had failed to eat breakfast anywhere (home, school, or on the way to school) every day during that same time period.

Moreover, New York City's school breakfast participation rates have been shown to pale in comparison to those of other American cities. According to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2012 report entitled *School Breakfast in America's Big Cities*, during the 2010-2011 school year, for every 100 eligible low-income New York City public school children who

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2010.

² *Ibid.*

³ New York State Education Department, "New York State Report Cards." Last accessed June 13, 2012.

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/reportcard/>.

⁴ A copy of the report is attached herein.

participated in the National School Lunch Program, only 33.9 ate in-school breakfast.⁵ Among the 26 major American cities that FRAC studied, New York's 33.9 percent school breakfast participation rate was the lowest, trailing some of the best-performing cities, such as Newark (87.2 percent) and Detroit (86.8 percent), by over 50 percentage points.⁶

CCC strongly believes that support for, and expansion of, the BIC program in New York City's public schools will improve children's access to, and consumption of, this necessary meal. BIC is the best strategy to increase children's participation in the School Breakfast Program, as it helps to reduce the many barriers that otherwise prevent students from eating breakfast at school. For example, BIC relieves busy parents of the burden of rushing their children to school early in the morning, before the school day begins, in order to guarantee that their children receive breakfast. BIC also eliminates the stigma some children feel when eating a free meal in the cafeteria prior to the beginning of the school day. Because BIC eliminates these obstacles, it results in more children actually eating breakfast, which is critical to their healthy development and ability to achieve academically.⁷ Further, studies have shown that students who regularly eat breakfast in their classrooms have better attendance and behavior, as well as improved cognitive functioning and academic achievement on standardized tests.⁸ In short, BIC increases children's consistent access to a much-needed healthy breakfast, and ultimately has a positive impact on their overall physical well-being and school performance.

Unfortunately, while the New York City Department of Education Office of School Food has made progress in implementing and expanding the BIC program in New York City schools, too few New York City public school students benefit from BIC. In March 2012, while about 400 of New York City's public schools participated in the BIC program, only 80 of these schools provided BIC in every single classroom. The remainder offered BIC in differing numbers of classrooms, with some only providing it in a single class, or for one particular grade level.

In light of these numbers, parents' survey responses about how often and where their children were eating breakfast, and the national data about New York City's school breakfast participation rates, our report recommended that the number of schools participating in BIC be vastly increased through a city-wide mandate of the program. We recognize, however, that taking BIC to scale in the City's enormous school system will take time and effort. We therefore recommended commencing expansion efforts in high-poverty areas. Specifically, we suggest beginning expansion in targeted neighborhoods in the Bronx, which is home to one of the most

⁵ Food Research and Action Center, "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011." January 2012. Last accessed June 13, 2012. http://frac.org/pdf/urban_school_breakfast_report_2012.pdf.

⁶ According to "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011," Newark and Detroit require BIC in almost all of their K-8 schools. *Ibid.*, at 7.

⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, "Strategies for School Breakfast Program Expansion, Breakfast in the Classroom." Last accessed January 27, 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/expansionstrategies.htm#classroom>; Food Research and Action Center, "Breakfast in the Classroom Fact Sheet." Last accessed January 27, 2012. http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/universal_classroom_breakfast_fact_sheet.pdf.

⁸ Ortiz, B. (Jan. 2011). "Why Breakfast in the Classroom Should be in Every Classroom." Presented at the conference "What Must New York Do Now to Prevent Obesity? A Symposium of Good Ideas from the Field," New York Academy of Medicine, New York; see also Turque, B. (2009, Nov. 16). Meal program aims to keep kids hungry for learning *Washington Post*; Callaci, D. Breakfast in the Classroom a Hit. Retrieval at <http://www.uft.org/news-stories/breakfast-classroom-hit/>.

food insecure Congressional Districts in the country, and, according to our findings, had fewer children consistently eating breakfast each day. We are pleased that the Council shares this approach to the expansion of the BIC program, as both Resolutions suggest prioritizing the establishment of BIC in schools with high percentages of children who qualify for free and reduced-price school meals.

Our report also made several additional suggestions that, if implemented, would help increase children's access to, and participation in, school breakfast, and would serve to support the expansion of the BIC program. For example, we recommend increased parent education and outreach about BIC, and the School Meals Program in general. Such efforts should include focused educational sessions about the benefits of BIC and how BIC can be established in one's own school, as well as information about the array of breakfast options and School Meals services that exist. Further, we ask that schools work to better communicate with parents about where their children's school breakfast is provided or located, and about what foods children are offered, so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's breakfasts. Since a school's principal will be equipped to determine the appropriate manner in which to conduct parent education and outreach for his or her school, this recommendation is consistent with the Resolutions' acknowledgements that principals should be granted the authority to determine how a school administers and participates in the BIC program.

Finally, we suggest more research is needed in order to further provide support for the BIC program. The necessary research includes an exploration of parent, student, teacher, and principal experiences with BIC. As expected, given the limited number of schools participating in BIC and the size of our survey sample, we only found a few survey respondents whose families had experiences with the BIC program. Almost all of those surveyed whose children received BIC, however, were extremely positive about the program. Much stands to be gained with regard to education and planning, simply from listening to those who have successfully engaged in BIC.

In sum, CCC supports the proposed Resolutions, and we are eager to work with the City Council to accomplish their goal of providing BIC in every New York City classroom. Given the poverty and food insecurity with which so many New York City families currently struggle, a program such as BIC, which helps all children access a healthy breakfast and increases children's participation in the School Breakfast Program, must be supported. We thank you for this opportunity to testify, and for the Council's commitment to improving children's access to breakfast.

THE SCHOOL
BREAKFAST
PROGRAM IN
NEW YORK CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

*Results from a Parent
Survey Concerning
Student Participation*



CITIZENS' COMMITTEE for CHILDREN
OF NEW YORK INC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc., would like to thank the following CCC volunteers and Youth Action Members, without whose time and energy this project could not have been completed: Julia Economou, Ariel Elghanayan, Lachoy Harris, Rebecca Kaplan, Diana Killip, Linda Lennon, Nancy Locker, Devin Marte, Jesus Ramirez, Aidalma Santos, Elizabeth Sheehan, and Nancy Solomon. CCC also wishes to thank the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, members of the New York City School Meals Coalition, staff from the Office of the Mayor's Food Policy Coordinator, and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for their feedback and insight during the course of this project.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) is a 68-year-old independent, non-profit, child advocacy organization, dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. CCC is devoted to increasing children's ability to access healthy food. A substantial body of literature shows that eating breakfast, which is widely recognized to be the most important meal of the day, beneficially impacts children's well-being and academic outcomes.¹ CCC's advocacy therefore includes efforts to improve children's access to nutritious breakfasts.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP), a federally assisted meal program operating in public and non-profit private schools, plays a critical role in ensuring that children have the opportunity to eat breakfast. The SBP reimburses participating schools for every in-school breakfast that they serve.² In exchange for this federal cash subsidy, participating schools offer free or reduced-price breakfasts to income-eligible children,³ and agree to serve breakfasts that meet federal dietary standards.⁴

New York City public schools participate in SBP, and offer free breakfast to all students, regardless of their income-eligibility status.⁵ Even though New York City's SBP is

universal, it does bear noting that a substantial number of New York City public school students qualify for free or reduced-price meals; out of New York City's over one million public school students, almost 725,000 are free or reduced-price eligible.⁶ Despite these facts, recently-released data show that New York City's school breakfast participation rate is low. According to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2012 report entitled *School Breakfast in America's Big Cities*, during the 2010-2011 school year, for every 100 eligible low-income New York City public school children who participated in the National School Lunch Program, only 33.9 ate in-school breakfast.⁷ Among the 26 major American cities that FRAC studied, New York's 33.9 percent school breakfast participation rate was the lowest, trailing some of the best-performing cities, such as Newark (87.2 percent) and Detroit (86.8 percent), by over 50 percentage points.⁸

Given the significant share of New York City students who are income eligible for free or reduced-price meals and the City's troubling breakfast participation rate, there is a clear need to explore ways in which to increase the number of children who eat breakfast at school. One method to improve the consumption of breakfast at school is to expand the City's use of the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program, which provides in-classroom breakfast to children at the start of the school day.

The New York City Department of Education Office of School Food has made progress in implementing and expanding the BIC program, but more work remains to be done. The majority of New York City public school students who eat breakfast at school still do so in the cafeteria, early in the morning before the start of the school day. In December 2011, while 338 of New York City's over 1,600 public schools participated in the BIC program, only 64 of these schools provided BIC in every

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- 1 Charles E. Basch, "Healthier Students Are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap," *EQUITY MATTERS: Research Review* 6 (2010): 46-48; J.M. Murphy, "Breakfast and Learning: An Updated Review." *Journal of Current Nutrition and Food Science* 3(1) (2007): 30-32; Food Research and Action Center, "Breakfast for Learning: Scientific Research on the Link Between Children's Nutrition and Academic Performance." Fall 2011. Last accessed January 27, 2012. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>; Food Research and Action Center, "Breakfast for Health." Fall 2011. Last accessed January 27, 2012. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/breakfastforhealth.pdf>.
 - 2 United States Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, "School Breakfast Program Fact Sheet." October 2011. Last accessed February 21, 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/AboutBFast/SBPFactSheet.pdf>.
 - 3 Children whose families have incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for free meals, while those whose families' incomes are between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.
 - 4 The USDA's School Breakfast Program Fact Sheet explains that the relevant Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that "no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. In addition, breakfasts must provide one-fourth of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C and calories."
 - 5 In 2003, New York City instituted a policy change mandating that New York City public school breakfast be free for all students, including those who did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

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- 6 New York State Education Department, "New York State Report Cards." Last accessed March 8, 2012. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/reportcard/>.
 - 7 Food Research and Action Center, "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011." January 2012. Last accessed February 21, 2012. http://frac.org/pdf/urban_school_breakfast_report_2012.pdf.
 - 8 According to "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011," Newark and Detroit require BIC in almost all of their K-8 schools. *Ibid.*, at 7.

classroom.⁹ In the remaining 274 schools that offered BIC, differing numbers of classrooms engaged in the program, with some schools piloting BIC in a single classroom, or for classes at a specific grade level. In sum, while there has been some advancement, very few New York City students receive BIC and there is much room to expand the program.

CCC supports the expansion of BIC in New York City schools because we strongly believe it will improve children's access to this necessary meal. The BIC method of in-classroom breakfast distribution is the best strategy to increase children's participation in SBP, because it helps to reduce the barriers that otherwise prevent students from eating breakfast at school.¹⁰ For example, BIC removes the need for parents to rush their children to school early in the morning, before the school day begins, in order to guarantee that their children eat breakfast in the school cafeteria. BIC also eliminates the stigma some children feel when receiving a free meal in the cafeteria, prior to the beginning of the school day. Because BIC helps diminish these obstacles, it results in more children actually eating breakfast, which is critical to their healthy development and ability to achieve academically.¹¹

In an effort to learn more about New York City's low school breakfast participation rates, New York City School breakfasts in general, and BIC in particular, CCC surveyed New York City parents about their children's school breakfasts.¹² Those surveyed thought breakfast was important for their children and appreciated that their children could receive a free breakfast at school. When

asked specifically about the BIC program, some survey participants, most of whose children had never received in-classroom breakfast, were unfamiliar with this program or its benefits. Conversely, almost all survey participants whose children currently or previously participated in the BIC program thought that the program was advantageous for their children.

Despite survey participants' primarily positive views regarding breakfast and the free distribution of breakfast in school, about a quarter of the survey participants' children had not eaten breakfast "every day" in the prior school week. The survey results also showed that "at home" was the most popular location in which survey participants' children had eaten breakfast in the preceding school week, although many survey participants reported that their children had eaten breakfast "at school" at some point during that same time period. Survey participants' children were least likely to have eaten breakfast "on the way to school."

Survey participants' responses to questions about where and how often their children had eaten breakfast in the week prior varied somewhat by borough. Notably, the children of survey participants in the Bronx were less likely than the children of Manhattan and Brooklyn survey participants to have eaten breakfast "every day" during the previous school week. Bronx survey participants' children were also less likely than the children of other survey participants to have eaten breakfast in their homes "every day" in the preceding week.

Finally, more than half of all survey participants reported that their children had "never" eaten breakfast "at home" and "at school" on the same day, while just over a third stated that their child had done so at some point in time. Our information gathered did not include data about the caloric and nutritional content or portion sizes of what the survey participants' children had eaten for breakfast in any location. Therefore, we could not, from this information alone, determine whether survey participants' children who had eaten breakfast in more than one location on the same day had consumed food that fell short of or exceeded the U.S. Department of Agriculture's recommendations about the nutritional and caloric make-up of a healthy breakfast.

The following is a detailed discussion of CCC's survey methodology, findings, and recommendations.

9 The New York City Department of Education Office of School Food provided this information in January 2012.

10 The top performing cities in "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011" – Newark, Detroit, Houston, and Washington, D.C. – mandate BIC in almost all of their K-8 schools. *Ibid.*

11 United States Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, "Strategies for School Breakfast Program Expansion, Breakfast in the Classroom." Last accessed January 27, 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/expansionstrategies.htm#classroom>; Food Research and Action Center, "Breakfast in the Classroom Fact Sheet." Last accessed January 27, 2012. http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/universal_classroom_breakfast_fact_sheet.pdf.

12 CCC also conducted this survey in order to provide in-kind support to a New York City Coalition Against Hunger-coordinated research project concerning the New York City School Breakfast Program and BIC.

METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY SAMPLE

CCC created a short street survey about school breakfast to be administered to parents whose children were attending New York City public elementary and middle schools. The survey was designed to explore parents' experiences with, and perceptions of, the breakfast provided in their children's schools, as well as to learn if, where, and how often their children had eaten breakfast in the previous school week.

CCC staff and volunteers conducted these surveys in late June 2011, prior to the end of the 2010-2011 school year. The surveys were administered in the following New York City locations: East Harlem, Manhattan; Mott Haven, the Bronx; Crotona Park, the Bronx; Prospect Park, Brooklyn; and Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Trained survey administrators approached potential survey participants in these neighborhoods to ask whether they were the parents or caretakers of a child currently attending a New York City

elementary and/or middle school,¹³ and whether they were interested in taking a five-minute survey about their child's school breakfast.

CCC surveyed 97 participants: 28 in the Bronx, 35 in Brooklyn, and 34 in Manhattan.¹⁴ The children of these survey participants ranged in age from four-years-old to fourteen-years-old. The median age was eight.

CCC analyzed the responses of all survey participants citywide and conducted borough-specific analysis of the data. It is important to note, however, that the sample size from each borough was small and may not be representative of the population of that borough.

¹³ The survey asked parents to answer the survey questions about only one child. If a survey participant had more than one child, that participant was asked to randomly choose one of his or her children about whom to answer all of the survey questions.

¹⁴ In total, CCC had 102 survey participants, but five surveys were not valid due to data recording errors.

DISCUSSION OF SURVEY AND FINDINGS

What did survey participants think about breakfast and the School Breakfast Program?

Survey participants were asked to agree or disagree with a series of general statements about breakfast's value. The survey participants' responses to these questions demonstrated their recognition of breakfast's importance. For example, every survey participant agreed with the assertion, "It is important for my child to eat breakfast." In addition, about 66 percent of survey participants agreed with the statements, "My child does not feel well if s/he doesn't eat breakfast," and "My child is tired if s/he doesn't eat breakfast."

Survey participants were also aware of the School Breakfast Program, and appreciated that their children could participate in it. Of the 97 survey participants, all but four knew that universal free breakfast was provided in their

"I'm very happy my child can eat breakfast at school. I think it's essential. My child would be hungry and distracted without breakfast. It's especially important for working mothers who don't have time to make breakfast at home and get to school and work on time."

—Survey Participant

children's schools. Further, 95 survey participants agreed with the statement, "I am happy that my child can eat breakfast in school." Such responses showed that survey participants found breakfast, and the School Breakfast Program, valuable.

What did parents think about the Breakfast in the Classroom program?

Given the limited number of schools that offer BIC, it is not surprising that at the time of the survey only six of the 97 survey participants reported that their children received in-classroom breakfast. Of the other survey participants, 86 reported that their children's schools provided breakfast in their cafeterias, and five did not know the answer to this question.

Five of the six survey participants whose children were receiving in-classroom breakfast made positive statements about the program, as did a survey participant who stated that her child had participated in BIC during the previous school year. Specifically, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement "It is a good idea to feed my child breakfast in his/her classroom," six of the seven survey participants who had children with current or previous BIC experience agreed. The seventh disagreed, but did not provide an explanation for her opinion, nor make any other statements about the program.

Further, 28.1 percent of all survey participants agreed that BIC was a good idea. Many of those survey participants whose children did not receive in-classroom breakfast, however, did not have as positive a view of BIC, since 61.5 percent of survey participants disagreed with this statement, and 10.4 percent did not have an opinion.

"Breakfast should be available in classroom... [it's] too hard to get to school early enough to have it in cafeteria."

—Survey Participant

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"Sometimes breakfast [in the cafeteria] is cut short and I don't like that. This is a problem because kids end up getting sent to class without breakfast."

—Survey Participant

• • •

"My son had breakfast in the classroom in pre-K and 1st grade. It was great because he really focused on eating right and eating his food. The cafeteria was too chaotic, especially for the young ones, and they were with the bigger kids. I think breakfast in the classroom was terrific."

—Survey Participant

How often in the past school week had the children of survey participants eaten breakfast?

Although, as noted above, all of the survey participants stated that breakfast was important, not all of their children had actually eaten breakfast each day during the previous school week. Survey participants were asked, “In the past school week, how often did your child eat breakfast?” and were directed to choose “every day,” “sometimes,” “never,” or “I don’t know” as an answer. In response, 75.3 percent of survey participants reported that their children had eaten breakfast “every day,” while 21.6 percent said that their children had eaten breakfast “sometimes.” Very few survey participants – three, or 3.1 percent – stated that their children had “never” eaten breakfast during the past school week. (See Figure 1 at right.)

A borough-specific review of responses to this survey question showed that the children of survey participants in the Bronx were less likely than children of survey participants in the other two boroughs to have eaten breakfast “every day” during the past week. Only 64.3 percent of Bronx survey participants stated that in the preceding school week their children had eaten breakfast “every day,” as compared to 74.3 percent of Brooklyn survey participants and 85.3 percent of Manhattan survey participants. (See Table 1 below.)

In sum, three-quarters of all of the survey participants’ children had eaten breakfast “every day” in the prior school week. However, survey participants’ responses to questions about how often in the last school week their children had eaten breakfast varied by borough, with children of survey participants in the Bronx being the least likely to have eaten breakfast “every day.”

Figure 1
In the past school week, how often did your child eat breakfast?

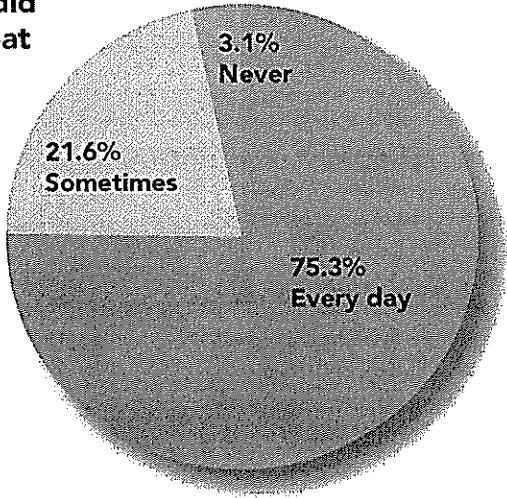


Table 1

Ate Breakfast That Week	Bronx (28 children)	Brooklyn (35 children)	Manhattan (34 children)	Total (97 children)
Every day	64.3% (18 children)	74.3% (26 children)	85.3% (29 children)	75.3% (73 children)
Sometimes	28.6% (8 children)	22.9% (8 children)	14.5% (5 children)	21.6% (21 children)
Never	7.1% (2 children)	2.9% (1 child)	0	3.1% (3 children)

Where had the children of survey participants eaten breakfast during the previous school week?

In addition to answering a general question about how often their children had eaten breakfast, survey participants were also asked to identify the locations in which their children had eaten breakfast, and how often their children had done so in those locations, during the previous school week.¹⁵ Survey participants were first asked, “In the past school week, how often did your child eat breakfast at home?” Survey participants’ most frequent response to this question was “every day” (45.7 percent). Further, about 86 percent of survey participants reported that their children had eaten breakfast at home at some point in the previous school week, as compared to the 12.8 percent of survey participants who stated that their children had “never” eaten breakfast at home during that time. Thus, in the school week prior to the survey participants’ taking of the survey, their children were more likely to have eaten breakfast at home at some point, than to have never eaten breakfast at home at all. (See Figure 2 below.)

There were, however, children of survey participants who had eaten breakfast at school during the same time period. When asked, “In the past school week, how often did your child eat breakfast at school,” almost 60 percent of survey participants responded that in the prior school week their children had eaten breakfast “at school” at some point. Only 21.3 percent of survey participants, though, reported that their children had actually eaten breakfast in school

“every day” during the previous school week, while another 38.3 percent of survey participants said that their children had done so “sometimes.” More than a third of survey participants – 36.2 percent – reported that in the last week their children had “never” eaten breakfast “at school.” (See Figure 2 below.)

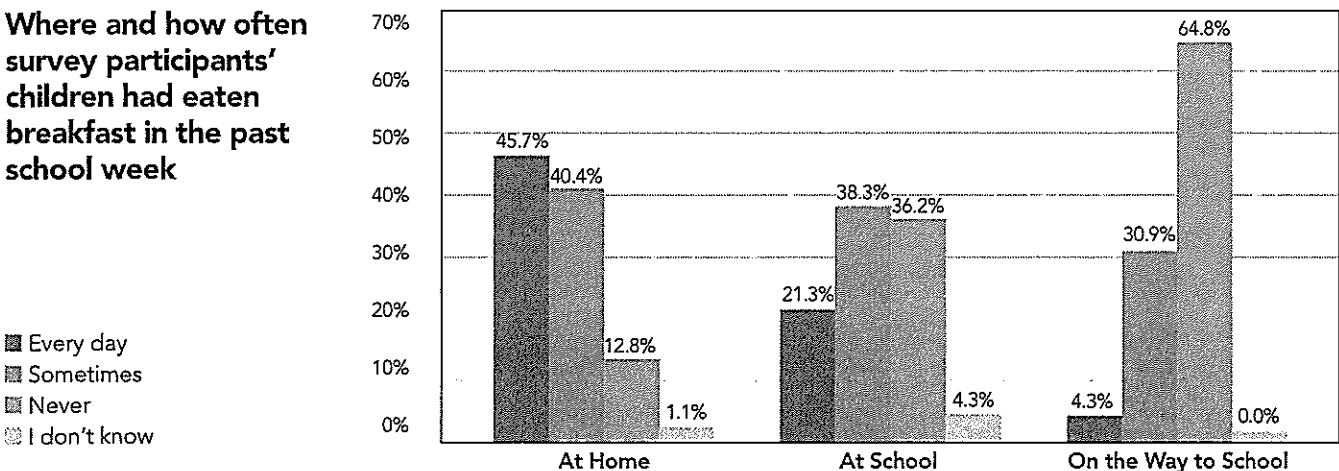
Finally, far fewer survey participants stated that their children had eaten “on the way to school” during the prior week than said that their children had eaten “at home” or “at school.” In response to the question “In the past school week, how often did your child eat breakfast on the way to school?” only four survey participants – 4.3 percent – said that their children had eaten “on the way to school” “every day,” and 30.9 percent responded that their children had “sometimes” eaten “on the way to school.” The majority of survey participants – 64.8 percent – stated that their children had “never” eaten on the way to school during the previous school week.¹⁶ (See Figure 2 below.)

As was the case with survey participants’ answers to the general question about how often their children had eaten breakfast in the past school week, borough-specific analysis showed that survey participants’ responses to questions about how often their children had eaten breakfast in the above-specified locations differed across boroughs. (See Tables 2-4 on next page.)

15 For this, and all other questions about how often the survey participants’ children had eaten breakfast in the previous week, the possible responses remained “every day,” “sometimes,” “never,” and “I don’t know.”

16 Survey participants were also asked, “In the past school week, was there any other place where your child ate breakfast?” Only two people responded “yes.” Both of these survey participants specified that their children had eaten breakfast at a fast food establishment.

Figure 2
Where and how often survey participants’ children had eaten breakfast in the past school week



First, the children of Bronx survey participants were less likely than the children of those surveyed in Brooklyn and Manhattan to have eaten breakfast “at home” “every day” of the prior school week. In fact, only about a third of Bronx survey participants reported that their children had eaten “at home” “every day” in the past week, as compared to over one-half of Manhattan survey participants. (See Table 2 below.)

The survey participants’ responses about how often their children had eaten breakfast in school were more uniform. In each borough, just over a third of survey participants reported that their children had “never” eaten breakfast “at school” in the past week. Also almost equal was the percentage of survey participants in the Bronx and Manhattan who said that their children had eaten “at school” “every day” in the past week. Survey participants from Brooklyn, however, provided somewhat different answers, with fewer of their children having eaten breakfast at school “every day” in the previous week

than the children of survey participants in other boroughs. (See Table 3 below.)

Finally, large percentages of survey participants in each borough stated that their children had not eaten “on the way to school” during the past week. Although some survey participants in each borough acknowledged that at some point in the prior week their children had eaten “on the way to school,” the only four survey participants who stated that their children had done so “every day” during the previous school week were from the Bronx, and represented 15.4 percent of Bronx survey participants. The children of Brooklyn and Manhattan survey participants were less likely to have eaten “on the way to school” at all during the last school week, with 41.2 percent of Brooklyn survey participants and 23.5 percent of Manhattan survey participants reporting that their children had “sometimes” done so, and no one reporting that this happened “every day.” (See Table 4 below.)

Table 2

Ate Breakfast at Home	Bronx (26 children)	Brooklyn (34 children)	Manhattan (34 children)	Total (94 children) ¹⁷
Every day	34.6% (9 children)	47.1% (16 children)	52.9% (18 children)	45.7% (43 children)
Sometimes	46.2% (12 children)	47.1% (16 children)	29.4% (10 children)	40.4% (38 children)
Never	19.2% (5 children)	2.9% (1 child)	17.6% (6 children)	12.8% (12 children)
Do not know	0	2.9% (1 child)	0	1.1% (1 child)

Table 3

Ate Breakfast at School	Bronx (26 children)	Brooklyn (34 children)	Manhattan (34 children)	Total (94 children)
Every day	26.9% (7 children)	11.8% (4 children)	26.5% (9 children)	21.3% (20 children)
Sometimes	30.8% (8 children)	50% (17 children)	32.4% (11 children)	38.3% (36 children)
Never	34.6% (9 children)	35.3% (12 children)	38.2% (13 children)	36.2% (34 children)
Do not know	7.7% (2 children)	2.9% (1 child)	2.9% (1 child)	4.3% (4 children)

Table 4

Ate Breakfast on the Way	Bronx (26 children)	Brooklyn (34 children)	Manhattan (34 children)	Total (94 children)
Every day	15.4% (4 children)	0	0	4.3% (4 children)
Sometimes	26.9% (7 children)	41.2% (14 children)	23.5% (8 children)	30.9% (29 children)
Never	57.7% (15 children)	58.8% (20 children)	76.5% (26 children)	64.9% (61 children)

¹⁷ Three survey participants responded “never” when asked, at the onset of the survey, how often their children had eaten breakfast in the past school week. These survey participants were therefore not asked any subsequent questions about where and how often their children had eaten breakfast during that school week. The smaller total sample size of 94 for this and other related questions about where children had eaten breakfast reflects the exclusion of those survey participants from the questions that did not apply to their children.

In sum, during the prior school week “at home” was the most prevalent location in which the children of survey participants had eaten breakfast, whereas “on the way to school” was the least popular place for the survey participants’ children to have eaten breakfast. In addition, many survey participants did report that their children had eaten breakfast “at school” at some point in the

previous week. A borough comparison of where survey participants’ children had eaten breakfast in the last week did reveal some similarities. However, this comparison also showed that children of Bronx survey participants were less likely than the children of other survey participants to have eaten breakfast “at home” “every day” in the preceding week.

Did the children of survey participants eat breakfast at home and at school on the same day?

Currently, a debate exists about whether children who participate in the School Breakfast Program, including BIC, are eating breakfast in more than one location, and whether this behavior contributes to childhood obesity.¹⁸ For example, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene administered a survey among third through fifth graders in 16 public schools and found an increased association between eating in multiple locations in the morning and BIC participation.¹⁹ This study did not, however, explore the caloric or nutritional value of what children had eaten in the different locations.

Meanwhile, federal studies that have touched upon this issue demonstrate that even though some children may be eating breakfast at school and elsewhere on the same day, they are not necessarily eating two full morning meals or overeating.²⁰

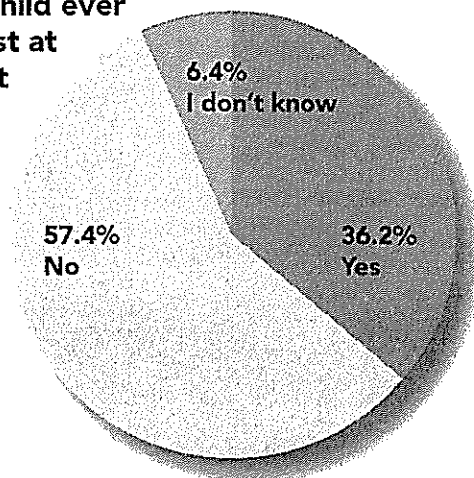
Cognizant of this on-going debate, CCC asked survey participants whether their children had ever eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day. Out of all survey participants, 36.2 percent reported that their children had, at some point, eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day. Conversely, 57.4 percent stated that their children had never eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day, while 6.4 percent did not know the answer to this question. (See Figure 3 at left.) Further, seven survey participants reported that their children had eaten breakfast at home and at school “every day” during the previous week. Finally, eight of the 83 survey participants who stated that their children had eaten breakfast on the day of the survey also reported that their children had eaten breakfast both at home and at school that morning.

Borough-specific analysis of responses to this question showed that the children of Bronx survey participants were more likely to have eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day than the children of participants in other boroughs. Of the Bronx survey participants, 46.2 percent answered “yes” when asked whether their children had ever eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day. Lower percentages of Brooklyn and Manhattan survey participants – 32.4 percent in each borough – responded “yes” to the same question.

18 Note that, as described in a recent *New York Times* article, the childhood obesity rate for New York City public school students in grades kindergarten through eight dropped for the first time in decades. Anemona Hartocollis, “Obesity Rate Falls for New York Schoolchildren.” *New York Times*. Dec. 15, 2011, accessed January 27, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/schoolbook/2011/12/15/obesity-in-new-york-children-on-the-decline-officials-say/>.

19 CCC learned about DOHMH’s survey through both a DOHMH presentation and a circulated conference poster. The poster explains that the survey was conducted in 16 schools, nine of which provided BIC in at least some of their classrooms, and seven of which were used as a control. The survey was administered during January through March 2010, but CCC does not know on how many days the survey was conducted, nor were we privy to the raw data.

Figure 3
Does your child ever eat breakfast at home and at school?



20 Barbara Devaney & Elizabeth Stuart, “Eating Breakfast: Effects of the School Breakfast Program,” Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., submitted to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service. August 1998; Joan E. McLaughlin, et al., “Evaluation of the School Breakfast Program Pilot Project: Findings from the First Year of Implementation,” *Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series*, No. CN-02-SBP, Project Officer: Anita Singh. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation, Alexandria, VA: 2002.

CCC could not, on the basis of this survey, determine whether the children of survey participants had, on the same day, eaten full breakfasts at home, at school, or both. Conclusions could therefore not be drawn from the data collected about whether the children of survey participants had eaten food that, according to United States Department of Agriculture caloric and nutritional standards, comprised a complete breakfast in any or all of the locations in which they ate. We stress that just because a child may have eaten in more than one location on the same morning, it does not automatically follow that that child ate two full breakfasts, or that what that child ate exceeded recommended caloric and nutritional standards. Therefore, our data can simply be interpreted to show that while the children of some survey participants had at some point in time eaten something in more than one location during the same morning, more than half of the survey participants' children had not done so.

Finally, it is worth examining Bronx survey participants' responses to this area of questioning in conjunction with their reports about where their children had eaten breakfast during the previous school week. Of the three boroughs in which surveys were conducted, the Bronx had the highest percentage of survey participants who stated that their children had, at some point, eaten breakfast at home

and at school on the same day, and the lowest percentage of survey participants who stated that their children had eaten at home "every day" during the past week. On first inspection, these results may seem somewhat incongruous. These answers are compatible, however, given the Bronx's soberingly high level of food insecurity and the effect that food insecurity can have on eating habits.²¹ Those who are food insecure cannot consistently access sufficient nutritious food, and therefore may, at certain times, eat less than adequate amounts of food because it is scarce, or eat more food because it is available.²² Thus, the Bronx survey results may reflect the amount of food insecurity present in that borough.

21 According to a Food Research and Action Center report released in 2012, the 16th Congressional District in the South Bronx was the second most food insecure Congressional District in the country. Food Research and Action Center, "Food Hardship in America 2011: Data for Nation, States, 100 MSAs, and Every Congressional District." Last accessed March 16, 2012. http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2011_report.pdf. A year earlier, the South Bronx was deemed the most food insecure Congressional District in the country, with almost 37 percent of residents reporting that at some point in the previous year they did not have money to buy food. Sam Dolnick. "The Obesity-Hunger Paradox." *New York Times*. March 12, 2010, accessed March 16, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/nyregion/14hunger.html>.

22 *Ibid*; Tracy Hampton, "Food Insecurity Harms Health, Well-Being of Millions in the United States," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298(16)(2007):1851-1853.

Did the survey participants' children who participated in the BIC program eat both at home and at school on the same day?

In light of the small sample size of six, any findings about this limited subset of survey participants are cautiously drawn. It is, however, worth closely inspecting the information that these survey participants provided, given the dearth of extensive study about BIC in New York City.

A majority of survey participants whose children received in-classroom breakfast said "no" when asked, "Does your child ever eat breakfast at home and at school?" Out of the

six survey participants whose children received BIC, five – or about 83 percent – reported that their children had never eaten breakfast at home and at school on the same day, including on the morning of the survey. A single survey participant whose child received in-classroom breakfast responded "yes" to this question, and also stated that her child had eaten breakfast at home and at school "every day" in past school week.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, CCC recommends the following:

1. Mandate BIC in all New York City schools, beginning with immediate targeted outreach and expansion of the program in the Bronx and other high-poverty areas.

As noted in the background section of this report, the New York City public school breakfast participation rates are incredibly low, especially in light of City students' existing need for school food, which is evidenced by how many New York City public school children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. CCC therefore hopes to see BIC mandated in all New York City public schools. BIC has been shown to improve breakfast participation and greatly increase access to a free and healthy breakfast for

many children living in food insecure households and neighborhoods.²² We recognize that taking BIC to scale in the City's massive school system may take time. We therefore recommend commencing expansion efforts in high-poverty areas, such as the Bronx, as it is home to one of the most food insecure Congressional Districts in the country, and, according to our findings, has fewer children consistently eating breakfast "every day."

2. Increase parent education about all school meals, especially BIC.

CCC's survey results showed that many parents were aware of and appreciated the School Breakfast Program, but did not know about the BIC program, or how it could benefit their children. CCC appreciates the Department of Education's Office of School Food's ongoing work and outreach to teach parents about school breakfasts and encourage their children's participation, but suggests more focused efforts, which would include educational sessions about the benefits of BIC and how BIC can be established in one's own school. In addition,

schools must work to better communicate with parents not just about where their children's school breakfast is provided or located, but also about what foods children are offered, so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's breakfasts based on more complete information. In addition, all schools should ensure that weekly menus are distributed, and that parents can access information about all school meals, including breakfast, on school websites, as well as information about the locations in which those meals are served.

3. Conduct further research about experiences with BIC, from the perspective of students, parents, teachers, and principals.

Almost all of the survey participants whose children received BIC were extremely positive about the program. It would be of great value to hear from the students themselves about their experiences with the school

breakfast program in general, and BIC in particular. Also valuable would be conversations with principals, teachers, and more parents who have experienced BIC in their schools and classrooms.

22 United States Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service, "Strategies for School Breakfast Program Expansion, Breakfast in the Classroom." Last accessed January 27, 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/expansionstrategies.htm#classroom>; Food Research and Action Center, "Breakfast in the Classroom Fact Sheet." Last accessed January 27, 2012. http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/universal_classroom_breakfast_fact_sheet.pdf; Food Research and Action Center, "School Breakfast Scorecard: School Year 2010-2011." January 2012. Last accessed March 12, 2012. http://frac.org/pdf/school_breakfast_scorecard_2010-2011.pdf.

4. Conduct further research to gather data about what children eat for breakfast.

As discussed in the findings section above, there is a dearth of research specifically examining what and how much children eat for breakfast, and why they may be eating breakfast in more than one place. Also lacking is information about whether the caloric and nutritional make-up of the foods that children eat in the morning fails to meet or surpasses what the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends for breakfast consumption. This lack of information makes it difficult, if not impossible, to draw conclusions about whether children are eating too much or too little, or foods that are healthy or unhealthy, for breakfast, and why they are doing so. It is important

to adequately study the nutritional and caloric make-up of what children eat for breakfast, in order to determine whether concerns about the impact of children's potentially eating breakfast in more than one place on the same day are legitimate. Such study may also provide insight into whether certain children eat breakfast in more than one place because they and their families are struggling with an inadequate level of food security, and are therefore eating as often as they can when food is actually available. In light of these questions, CCC recommends there be further study to explore this issue.

CONCLUSION

Through the School Breakfast Program, New York City can ensure that over one million public school children receive a healthy breakfast at the start of each day. This task is critical, not only because breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but also because about 725,000 of New York City's public school children come from households with incomes low enough to qualify them for free or reduced-price meals. Despite these facts, New York City's school breakfast participation rate remains low. The number of children who participate in school breakfast can, however, be markedly increased through both the expansion of the BIC program and parental engagement. Also, further study about opinions

of, and experiences with, BIC can provide insight into how to strengthen and expand this successful program, and ultimately school breakfast participation. Similarly, gathering information about New York City students' breakfast habits – the what, where, and why of their breakfasts – will facilitate a better understanding of the choices and needs of New York City's public school children and their families, which can ultimately help identify additional ways to use school-based programs and initiatives to address hunger and improve child nutrition. Overall, these steps present a significant opportunity to contribute to the food security and well-being of so many of New York City's children.

ABOUT CCC

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC) has convened, informed and mobilized New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. CCC's approach to child advocacy is fact-based and combines the best features of public policy advocacy with a tradition of citizen activism. Our focus is on identifying the causes and effects of vulnerability and disadvantage, recommending solutions to problems children face and working to make public policies, budgets, services and benefits more responsive to children. Our mission is to ensure that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

CCC is a non-profit organization supported entirely by individuals, foundations and corporations.

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**Testimony of Joel Berg, Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger
Before Hearing of the New York City Council
Committees on Education
Regarding Breakfast in New York City Public Schools**

June 20, 2011

Introduction

Good afternoon. I am Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCA), which represents the more than 1,100 food pantries and soup kitchens in New York City and the 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers who live in homes that cannot afford enough food.

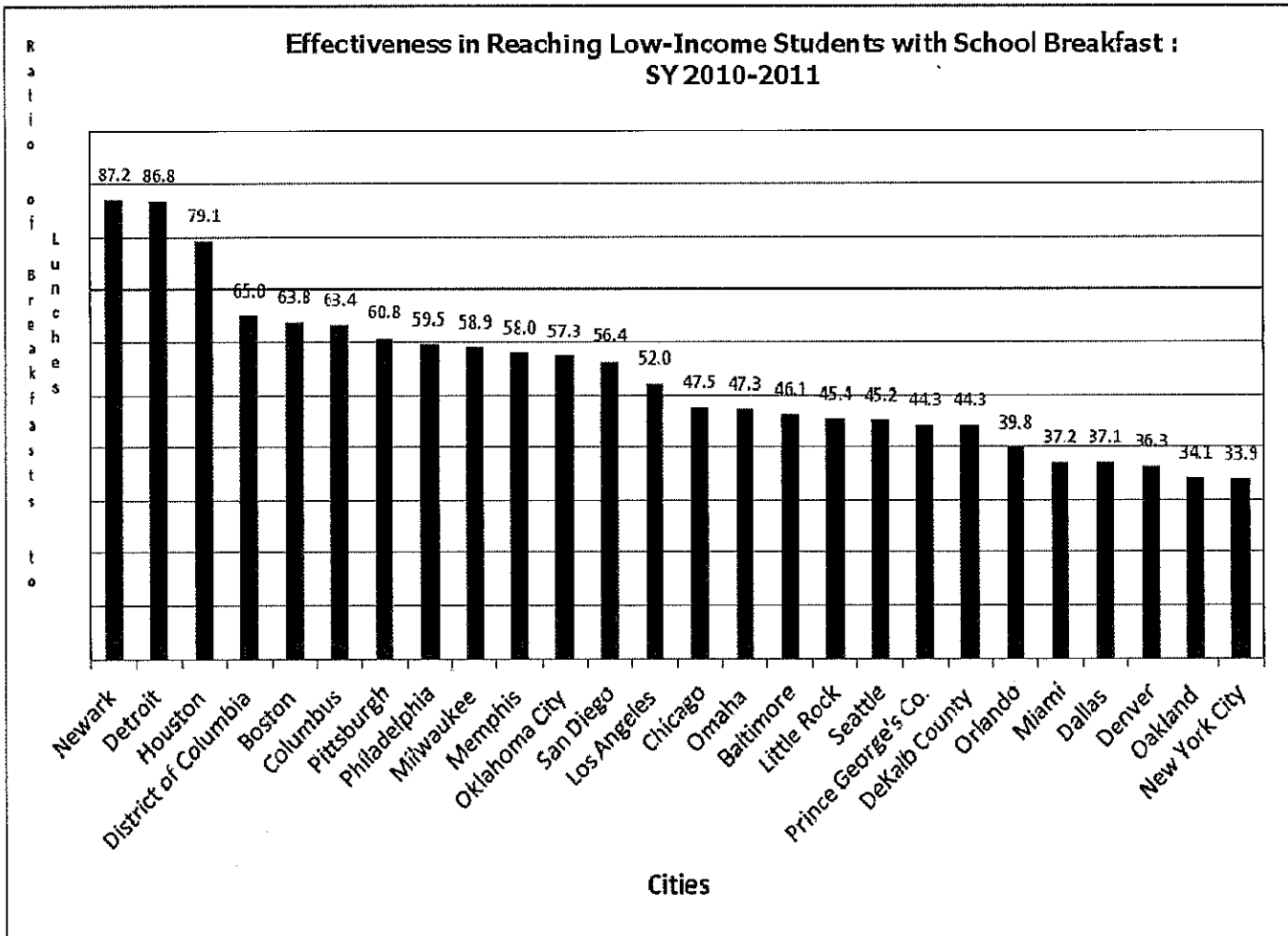
First, I want to thank Chairman Jackson and all the committee members for having this vital hearing and continuing to focus on this issue. We strongly support passage of both Proposed Res. No. 910-A and Proposed Res. No. 911-A.

Breakfast in the Classroom is the Best Way To Reduce Child Hunger

The City has great opportunity to improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children, decrease childhood obesity, and receive more revenue from the federal government for the Department of Education (DOE). The City can quickly and easily achieve these outcomes by expanding the provision of school breakfast in first period classrooms to leverage the USDA's new and improved school meals nutrition guidelines, as well as the new Medicaid direct certification pilot program.

Each day, schools across New York City offer free, universal school breakfasts. They require no paperwork, forms, hassle, or cost to the students. Despite the simplicity of this process and the outreach efforts of the DOE's Office of SchoolFood to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP), New York City's participation has significantly lagged. According to a January 2012 report by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) on school breakfast participation in 26 large urban school districts across the country, New York City ranked last, with only 33.9% of the students receiving free or reduced-price (FRP) lunches also receiving free breakfasts.

*



That's right, out of 26 big cities, New York City is dead last. It's bad enough when we lose to Boston or Philadelphia in basketball, football, hockey, or baseball, but its downright unforgivable when we lose to them so badly in feeding our children.

DOE disputes this ranking – with no explanation of why-- but even the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has published a report indicating that 80% of eligible students in New York City don't receive school breakfast. Besides, even if New York City were merely second or third to worst in the nation rather than dead last, would the City brag about that.

The facts is that, on other topics, when city-by-city statistics make New York City look better than other cities, New York touts those statistics over and over again. It is only when statistics make New York look worse that the City somehow finds a way to discredit or ignore them.

Having learned first-hand of Newark's success with in-classroom breakfast, started in 2008, New York City launched a pilot project to try out in-classroom breakfasts in a number of schools. At one pilot site I visited, Public School 68 in the Bronx, every student ate breakfast together during their first-period class. The pilot worked better than anyone could have anticipated. The school's

principal told me that, before the pilot, an average of 50 kids came to school late everyday, so many that she had to assign extra staff to writing out late slips. When they started serving breakfast in their classrooms, kids came in early just for the meals, and now only about five kids a day are late—a 900 percent decrease in tardiness. The principal also told me that absenteeism and visits to school nurses also dropped, and in the afternoons, kids fell asleep in the classrooms less frequently. This is obviously not only good nutrition policy but also good education policy. We have collected our own preliminary data that correlates in-classroom breakfast to improved attendance and improved scores on math standardized tests.

Given that most school districts must now have a complex system in place to collect forms and data on the income of each student's parents to determine the eligibility of each child for either free, reduced-price, or full-cost meals, when a district adopts a universal breakfast or lunch policy, not only does it reduce the stigma faced by children and thereby increases participation, it also reduces the paperwork and bureaucracy, saving the school district time and money. When kids eat breakfast in a classroom instead of a lunchroom that is a hallway or two away, they have more time to focus on their studies and are protected from the stigma of having to leave their friends to go to a special breakfast room "for the poor kids." Given that textbooks are widely understood to be a critical educational tool, public school districts typically lend them out free of charge to all students. The time is ripe for the nation to view school meals in the same way. Free breakfast and lunch should be universal in all classrooms around the country

The facts have also proven to us, by far, that the most effective method for increasing participation in school breakfast – and thus stemming both obesity and food insecurity – is the implementation of breakfast in the classroom (BIC). That is why it is so inexplicable, heartbreaking, and counter-productive that the Bloomberg Administration has stopped seriously promoting in-classroom breakfast.

As reported in the FRAC school breakfast study, "districts serving breakfast in the classroom have the highest participation rates."¹ Evidence in our own city is consistent with this finding: at 23 schools offering BIC schoolwide in January 2012, the breakfast participation rate was 68% of all students. **Yet, because so few schools participate in BIC, and because even fewer offer it in every classroom, less than 4 percent of all DOE students receive breakfast in the classroom.**

By expanding breakfast in the classroom or the "grab and go" model in hallways, the Department of Education can:

Improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children. A study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reports that "evidence suggests that breakfast consumption may improve cognitive function related to memory, test grades, and school attendance." Nearly one in three children in New York City (30 percent, or 523,000) lives below the federal poverty level, a rate considerably higher than the national average of 22 percent. Approximately one in four children in New York City – about 500,000 – suffers from hunger or food insecurity. For children in families that are struggling to afford food, and thus often skip eating breakfast entirely, the single most effective health intervention is to provide nutritious school breakfasts.

Decrease childhood obesity – Research has linked regular breakfast consumption with lower rates of obesity. A study by Dr. Phillip Gleason and Dr. Allison Dodd found “school breakfast participation was associated with significantly lower body mass index... [and] may be a protective factor, by encouraging students to consume breakfast more regularly.” Additionally, an analysis of 47 studies about the breakfast habits of children and teens came to the conclusion that “breakfast eaters generally consumed more daily calories yet were less likely to be overweight.”

The USDA’s new nutritional guidelines for school breakfast reduce the minimum calorie requirement while significantly improving the nutritional content, presenting a real opportunity for DOE to offer students a leaner, more nutritious breakfast.

Receive more revenue from the federal government – According to FRAC’s analysis, the New York City Department of Education would have collected \$50.95 million in additional federal funds, and served an additional 193,785 low-income students, if it met a 70:100 [FRP Breakfast:FRP Lunch] ratio during the 2010-2011 school year.

The City’s new pilot project to tie school meals reimbursements to Medicaid will save the city administrative costs by allowing participating children, enrolled in Medicaid, to be automatically eligible for free school meals. This means that a significant number of additional children in DOE schools will have their meals automatically reimbursed by the federal government.

The Flawed Reasons for No Longer Seriously Promoting In Classroom Breakfasts

City Claim #1: There is not convincing evidence that breakfast in the classroom will improve nutritional status.

Reality: The School Breakfast Program improves the nutritional status of low-income students, and breakfast in the classroom is the most effective method of delivery.

School breakfast is one of the most effective ways of improving the nutritional profile of students in New York City Schools. In New York City Schools, 74% of the students qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch. According to the USDA Food Security Supplement, approximately one in four children in New York City suffers from hunger or food insecurity. Because children in food insecure households may not get adequate nutrition until the next morning in school, it is important to breakdown the barriers that keep children from participating in a breakfast program ensuring they are able to learn throughout the day. In fact, for students participating in the nutrition programs, “...more so than school lunch, school breakfast appears to be **used primarily by the subset of students who are most vulnerable.** ...making the school breakfast more broadly available would be beneficial in ensuring that more children start their school day with a meal.”

Not only does school breakfast provide a meal to start the day, it provides nutrition for the rest of the day. Breakfast in the classroom is endorsed as an effective hunger intervention in an article in the *Journal of School Health* titled Breakfast and the Achievement Gap Among Urban Minority

Youth, stating, “High quality breakfast programs that allow students to eat breakfast in the classroom are especially needed **for youth who are not likely to get good nutrition the rest of the day.**” For children in families that are struggling to afford food, and thus often skip eating breakfast entirely, the single most effective health intervention is to provide nutritious school breakfasts in the classroom.

Higher breakfast participation also improves grades and behavior. A study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reports that “evidence suggests that breakfast consumption may improve cognitive function related to memory, test grades, and school attendance.” With the new nutrition guidelines based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine rolling out over the next few years (Fig. 1), making the accessibility of the School Breakfast Program easier through breakfast in the classroom would enable more children to consume a complete and nutritious breakfast.

City Claim #2: We do not believe that breakfast in the classroom will decrease childhood obesity. There is substantial risk of contributing to overweight and obesity among New York City students.

Reality: The consumption of a balanced breakfast in the classroom does not contribute to obesity and regular breakfast eaters are less likely to be overweight or obese. Hunger and food insecurity are far bigger problems facing New York students – and a far larger contributor towards obesity.

Food Group	Current Breakfast Requirements K-12	New Breakfast Requirements K-12
Fruit	½ cup per day (vegetable substitution allowed)	1 cup per day (vegetable substitution allowed) Note: Quantity required SY 2014-15. Students are allowed to select ½ cup of fruit under OVS.
Grains and Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)	½ cup per day (vegetable substitution allowed)	Daily min. and weekly ranges for grains: Grades K-5: 1 oz eq. min. daily (7-10 oz weekly) Grades 6-8 : 1 oz eq. min. daily (8-10 oz weekly) Grades 9-12 : 1 oz eq. min. daily (9-10 oz weekly) Note: Quantity required SY 2013-14. Schools may substitute M/MA for grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.
Whole Grains	Encouraged	At least half of the grains must be whole grain-rich beginning July 1, 2013. Beginning July 1, 2014, all grains must be whole grain rich.
Milk	1 cup Variety of fat contents allowed; flavor not restricted	1 cup Must be fat-free (unflavored/flavored) or 1% low fat (unflavored)

Nutrient Standards	Current Breakfast Standards K-12	New Breakfast Standards K-12		
		Target 1: SY14-15	Target 2: SY17-18	Target 1: SY22-23
Sodium	Reduce, no set targets	≤540mg (K-5); ≤600mg (6-8); ≤640mg (9-12)	≤485mg (K-5); ≤535mg (6-8); ≤570mg (9-12)	≤430mg (K-5); ≤470mg (6-8); ≤500mg (9-12)
Calories	Calories (min. only) <i>Traditional Menu Planning</i> 554 (grades K-12) <i>Enhanced Menu Planning</i> 554 (grades K-12) 774 (optional grades 7-12) <i>Nutrient Based Menu Planning</i> 554 (grades K-12) 618 (optional grades 7-12)	Calorie Ranges (min. & max.) <i>Only food-based menu planning allowed</i> 350-500 (grades K-5) 400-550 (grades 6-8) 450-600 (grades 9-12)		
Trans Fat	No Limit	Zero grams per serving (nutrition label)		

Figure 1. New Nutrition Guidelines for the School Breakfast Program.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/legislation/comparison.pdf>

The definition of breakfast matters. The studies that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene used to defend their recommendation against expanding BIC defines a breakfast, “as any food or drink consumed after awakening and before the survey was administered,” or “food that came from any of the following 4 locations: home, bodega/restaurant, school cafeteria, or classroom.” Yet, according to research from the USDA following the 1992 School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study (SNDA-1), defining breakfast broadly limits the insight into determining whether a child is eating breakfast through the School Breakfast Program (SBP). When breakfast is defined broadly as any food containing at least 50 calories, like the SNDA-1, the SBP “is not associated with an increased likelihood of eating breakfast.” “When breakfast is defined as consumption of food from two or more food groups and intake of food energy greater than 10 percent of the RDA, the likelihood of eating breakfast is significantly higher for low-income students attending schools with the SBP than for similar students attending schools without it.” Therefore, defining breakfast as eating in two locations is only a rhetorical scare tactic that implies children are “double breakfasting”.

Additionally, the peer-reviewed research that they use to support their case does not determine any causal link between BMI and school breakfast. It instead calls for studies to determine more factors related to BMI and school breakfast.

“For example, does the energy content of school breakfast differ by location (classroom; cafeteria)? Does the energy content of school meals differ by children’s BMI whether offer-vs-serve foodservice is implemented? Results from such studies could provide important guidance for policy changes concerning school meals.”

The recommendation make light of new guidelines surrounding breakfast in the classroom such as offer versus serve. The new guidelines, as can be seen in Fig. 1, will also reduce the number of calories in grade K-5 by 54-204 calories. Age-appropriate calories counts are another one of the developments in the new nutrition guidelines recommended by the Institute of Medicine.

At this young age, it is important to instill good behavior in regards to eating. “Considering that **behavior change is central to preventing obesity**, the effectiveness of short-term interventions may be biased and even regressive whereas effective long-term interventions are more promising.” Breakfast in the classroom provides just such an opportunity to change behavior around what is often called the most important meal of the day.

Further evidence of long-term behavior affecting BMI comes from a 10 year study in the journal *Obesity* called, Longitudinal Patterns of Breakfast Eating in Black and White Adolescent Girls. One of its conclusions was, “Among girls with a high BMI at baseline (age 9), those who at breakfast more often had lower BMI at the end of the study (age 19). In other words, **eating breakfast more often was associated with decreased BMI** at the end of the study, but only among girls who had relatively high BMI at the beginning of the study.”

In fact, breakfast eating may be a protective factor when it comes to risk of obesity and overweight. From the journal *Pediatric Obesity*, “children who consumed more than three meals per day and also consumed **breakfast daily, were two times less likely to be overweight or obese.**”

Ironically, the very way that the City managed in classroom breakfast, having it in some classrooms but not others, **increases** the possibility that parents will provide an extra breakfast to their children at home, because they are confused as to which of their children get it at school and/or because they don't want to provide differential treatment to their children at home.

City Claim #3: We want to maintain principal autonomy by avoiding a BIC mandate, and a public education campaign is enough to increase cafeteria breakfast.

Reality: Principal's must follow a wide variety of DOE mandates on a wide variety of topics. If something is a priority for the City, it is indeed mandated in every school. By using this excuse to avoid a BIC mandate, the DOE is also avoiding millions of dollars in federal funds

When there are other matters of public health, mandates are absolutely necessary. When the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulates schools for food safety, it doesn't let principals pick and choose which regulations they want to follow. Similarly, sex education is another public health intervention where it was deemed right to mandate the curriculum to all students at the appropriate grade level.

By leaving the decision to implement BIC up to the principal, the DOE leaves the decision to eliminate many barriers for children wanting to eat breakfast, sends the message that this is not a priority, and leaves millions of dollars in federal funds off the table. These funds could go

towards better food or equipment. According to FRAC's analysis, the New York City Department of Education would have collected **\$50.95 million in additional federal funds**, and served an additional 193,785 low-income students, if it met a 70:100 [FRP Breakfast:FRP Lunch] ratio during the 2010-2011 school year.

The DOE maintains that a public education campaign will be sufficient to increase the number of children participating in the cafeteria breakfast. This would be in accordance with the memo SP 40-2011 from USDA's Child Nutrition Division, which states, "In addition, schools should send reminders regarding the availability of the SBP multiple times throughout the school year."

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the Bloomberg Administration has ignored these facts and has halted serious efforts to expand breakfast participation. I have no doubt that the next Mayor of the City will take a far more progressive and effective approach to expanding in-classroom breakfast. However, the 50,000 children struggling against hunger can't wait another year and a half. That is why these resolutions are so important. Thank you.

**Testimony of the Hunger Action Network of New York State
to the NYC City Council Education Committee
on resolutions 910-A and 911-A Relating to Breakfast in the Classroom Mandate
June 20, 2012**

The Hunger Action Network of New York State is a statewide membership organization of direct food providers, advocates and other individuals whose goal is to end hunger and its root causes, including poverty, in New York State.

We want to thank the Education Committee for holding this hearing on the critical matter of increasing participation in the school breakfast program. We strongly support the two resolutions calling upon the Mayor and the Governor to support requiring schools to participate in the breakfast in the classroom program.

The annual report from the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) shows that NYC is now the worst large city in the US in terms of participation in the federal school breakfast program. This is a slight drop from previous years where it has ranked either 2nd or 3rd worst. Only 33.9 percent of students participating in lunch participate in breakfast in NYC.

FRAC's report found that nationwide school districts serving breakfast in the classroom have the highest participation rates. Evidence in our own city is consistent with this finding: at 23 schools offering BIC school wide in January 2012, the breakfast participation rate was 68% of all students.¹

Hunger Action Network was surprised to see how poorly NYC was performing in school breakfast participation, given the positive reviews to the city's breakfast in the classroom initiative. Unfortunately, the Mayor, who controls the city's schools, leaves it up to the discretion of the individual principals. Less than a quarter of schools participate and only some of the classrooms in those schools offer the in-classroom option. Thus we began to advocate in support of a mandate, much as we had done in 1993 at the state level to expand the school breakfast program statewide (it was already mandated in NYC at that point).

Nearly half of NYC households with children had difficulty affording food in 2009. nearly 500,000 city children, or one in four, live in families that cannot afford an adequate supply of food. Children are less than a fourth (23%) of the New York City's total population but they represent 33% of city residents living below the federal poverty level. Children represent 37% of the guests of the city's emergency food programs. EFPs report that the families with children are the fastest growing segment of those they feed.

Given the incredibly high rate of hunger in NYC, especially among children, one would expect the Mayor to do everything possible to take advantage of the school breakfast programs. Instead, its refusal to aggressively implement Breakfast in the Classroom deprives poor children and the local economy of hundreds of millions of extra federal dollars for food. Recently it publicly began to further distance itself from the program due to its misguided and unsubstantiated concern that school breakfast programs contribute to the problem of obesity. In contrast, increasing participation in the federal nutrition programs – including school breakfast – is a childhood obesity prevention strategy recommended by two recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) committees and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity.

FRAC estimated that if NYC was able to increase breakfast participation to 70% rather than 33.9%, the City would have receive an extra \$50 million. Each school day in school year 2010–2011, schools lost at least \$1.48 in federal nutrition funding for every child who would have received a free breakfast and \$1.18 for every child who would have received a reduced-price breakfast, but who was not served. An additional \$0.28 in federal

¹ Calculated using Jan. 2012 Breakfast in the Classroom Metrics Report from the Department of Education Office of School Food. Only 23 of the 52 schools offering BIC school wide (*i.e.*, in all classrooms) have publicly available attendance data for Jan. 2012 (<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/attendance/default.htm>). Many of the schools offering BIC school wide that don't post attendance data on the DOE website are charter schools.

funds per child per meal were forfeited if those low-income children attended a “severe need” school—one of the thousands of schools in which at least 40 percent of lunches served were free or reduced-price.

It is well-established that Breakfast in the Classroom improves student achievement, diets and behavior. Schools that offer breakfast in the classroom report decreases in discipline and psychological problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments. Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.

The District of Columbia was the first city to legislate breakfast in the classroom, through its Healthy Schools Act. In the 66 D.C. Public School elementary schools with some form of breakfast in the classroom, 77 percent of students were eating breakfast on average each day in the first half of school year 2011-2012 — an increase of six percentage points from school year 2010-2011 and 30 percentage points from school year 2009- 2010. DC Hunger Solutions’ report of the school year 2010-2011 data is available at www.dchunger.org/pdf/dc_classroom_breakfast_2010-2011report.pdf.

Chicago recently made participation mandatory. Even though it is recent and may only partially be reflected if at all in the statistics, Chicago did move up from number 22 to 14 among large school districts.

There is considerable evidence that school breakfast participation reduces, rather than increases, obesity.

Research has linked regular breakfast consumption with lower rates of obesity. A study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found “school breakfast participation was associated with significantly lower body mass index... [and] may be a protective factor, by encouraging students to consume breakfast more regularly.”² Additionally, an analysis of 47 studies about the breakfast habits of children and teens came to the conclusion that “breakfast eaters generally consumed more daily calories yet were less likely to be overweight.”³ The USDA’s new nutritional guidelines for school breakfast reduce the minimum calorie requirement while significantly improving the nutritional content, presenting a real opportunity for DOE to offer students a leaner, more nutritious breakfast.

FRAC reports that school breakfast may protect against childhood obesity. School breakfast participation is associated with a lower body mass index (BMI, an indicator of excess body fat), lower probability of overweight, and lower probability of obesity. Food insecure girls participating in the school lunch, school breakfast, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP, or food stamps) programs (or all three programs combined) have a lower risk of overweight compared to food insecure girls from non-participating households. Participation in federally-funded meals in child care, preschool, school, or summer settings is associated with a lower BMI among young, low-income children. Children and adolescents who eat breakfast have more favorable weight-related outcomes (e.g., lower BMI, lower waist circumference, lesser likelihood of being chronically obese) in the short term and long term than those who skip breakfast.

The effect of school breakfast participation on obesity has also been studied. Participation in the SBP reduces breakfast skipping. Participation has never been shown to increase the risk of obesity. And, at least among food-insecure girls, participation in SBP and other food assistance programs is associated with a 68% reduction in the risk of overweight. In addition, the availability of the SBP affects the quality of the diets of other members of the family. The SBP is associated with better scores on the Healthy Eating Index and fewer calories from fat among preschool children and adults in the families of school-age children.

2 Gleason, P. M. & Dodd, A. H. (2009). School breakfast program but not school lunch program participation is associated with lower body mass index. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109:2 Supplement, S118-S128.

3 Rampersaud *et al.*

We also find that subsidized meals at school or day care are beneficial for children's weight status, and we argue that expanding access to subsidized meals may be the most effective tool to use in combating obesity in poor children. - Kimbro & Rigby, 2010

There is a large body of research on the strong links between school breakfast consumption and favorable dietary, health, and educational outcomes among children and adolescents.

School breakfast participation improves children's dietary intake.

- School breakfast participants are more likely to consume diets that are adequate or exceed standards for important vitamins and minerals (e.g., vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, phosphorus).^{1,2,3}
- Children and adolescents who skip breakfast tend to have poorer nutrient intakes than those who eat breakfast.^{4,5,6} Eating breakfast regularly has been linked with greater intake of fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin C, and other vitamins and minerals, and lower intake of fat, cholesterol, and sodium.^{7,8}
- Children who participate in school breakfast are more likely to consume fruit and milk at breakfast.⁹
- Low-income children who eat school breakfast have better overall diet quality than those who eat breakfast elsewhere or skip breakfast.¹⁰ An improvement in dietary quality also may extend to the family members of children with access to the program.¹¹

School breakfast decreases the risk of food insecurity.

- School breakfast offered to all students for free* may eliminate disparities between food secure and food insecure children in terms of eating breakfast at all.¹²
- Students with improved nutrient intake as a result of a program of school breakfast offered free to all students report decreases in symptoms of hunger.¹³
- Access to school breakfast decreases the risk of marginal food insecurity and breakfast skipping, especially for low-income children.^{14,15}
- Children are more vulnerable to food insecurity during the summer – a time when many do not have access to the good nutrition provided by the regular year school meal programs.¹⁶

School breakfast may protect against childhood obesity.

- School breakfast participation is associated with a lower body mass index (BMI, an indicator of excess body fat), lower probability of overweight, and lower probability of obesity.^{17,18}
- Food insecure girls participating in the school lunch, school breakfast, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP, or food stamps) programs (or all three programs combined) have a lower risk of overweight compared to food insecure girls from non-participating households.¹⁹
- Participation in federally-funded meals in child care, preschool, school, or summer settings is associated with a lower BMI among young, low-income children.²⁰
- Children and adolescents who eat breakfast have more favorable weight-related outcomes (e.g., lower BMI, lower waist circumference, lesser likelihood of being chronically obese) in the short term and long term than those who skip breakfast.^{21,22,23,24,25,26,27}

* Offering breakfast to all students for free is sometimes referred to as "universal breakfast" or "universal-free breakfast." The program helps remove the stigma for low-income children of participation in school breakfast and thereby increases participation among students generally, but particularly low-income students.

- Increasing participation in the federal nutrition programs – including school breakfast – is a childhood obesity prevention strategy recommended by two recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) committees and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity.^{28,29,30}

School breakfast participation protects against other negative health outcomes.

- Breakfast skipping among children and adolescents is associated with a number of poor health outcomes and health-compromising behaviors, including higher blood cholesterol and insulin levels, smoking, alcohol use, physical inactivity, disordered eating, and unhealthy weight management practices.^{31,32,33,34}
- School breakfast, including breakfast offered free to all students, has been linked with fewer visits to the school nurse, particularly in the morning.³⁵
- School breakfast participation, especially breakfast offered free to all students, positively impacts children's mental health, including reductions in behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression.^{36,37}
- Food insecurity is associated with some of the most costly health problems in the U.S., including diabetes, heart disease, and depression.^{38,39,40,41} Children experiencing hunger are more likely to experience lower physical functioning, more frequent stomachaches and headaches, and mental health problems (e.g., depression and anxiety), and to be in poorer health.^{42,43,44,45}

School breakfast helps improve children's academic performance, whereas skipping breakfast and experiencing hunger impair development and learning.[†]

- Students who participate in school breakfast show improved attendance, behavior, and academic performance as well as decreased tardiness.⁴⁶
- Participating in school breakfast is associated with improved math grades, attendance, and punctuality.⁴⁷
- Children who are undernourished have poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast.⁴⁸
- Behavioral, emotional, and academic problems are more prevalent among children with hunger.⁴⁹
- Children experiencing hunger have lower math scores and are more likely to repeat a grade.⁵⁰

Breakfast in the classroom programs[‡] and programs offering breakfast free to all children in the cafeteria yield other positive results for health and learning.

- Programs offering breakfast free to all students and breakfast in the classroom boost student breakfast participation.^{51,52,53}
- Students attending schools that offer a breakfast free to all students are more likely to consume a nutritionally substantive breakfast and to consume significantly more calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, fruit, and dairy products at breakfast, when compared to students from schools with a traditional means-tested school breakfast in the cafeteria program.⁵⁴
- Children who increase their school breakfast participation as a result of a school breakfast program offered free to all students show improvements in math scores, attendance, punctuality, depression, anxiety, and hyperactivity.⁵⁵

This brief was prepared by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC): Heather Hartline-Grafton, DrPH, RD, Senior Nutrition Policy Analyst, with assistance from Madeleine Levin, MPH, Senior Policy Analyst and Lucienne Cross, Summer Intern.

[†] For more information, read FRAC's *Breakfast for Learning* brief available at www.frac.org.

[‡] Breakfast in the classroom programs are an increasingly popular alternative to traditional before-the-bell, cafeteria-based breakfast programs. Breakfast is brought in from the kitchen in containers that keep dishes at the right temperature, or picked up from carts in the hallways as students enter class. Typically this breakfast is offered free to all students. Such programs boost school breakfast participation and remove the stigma associated with participation.

Statement/Letter of Support for Breakfast in the Classroom

As health professionals we are committed to the health and wellness of New York City's children. With child health as our top priority, we are uniting to promote policy changes that will help reduce two issues that millions of New York City children are faced with every day; food insecurity (hunger) and childhood obesity. We strongly support the Breakfast in the Classroom Program as a solution to both.

One in four of New York City's children are living in food insecure homes with little access to healthy, affordable food.¹ Hungry children cannot learn as hunger impacts the ability to concentrate in the classroom. Beginning each day with a nutritious breakfast improves children's academic performance and reduces tardiness and visits to the nurse's office.²

While hunger is a real and valid concern, so are the rates of obesity. In grades K-8, New York City's school children have an obesity rate of 20.7%.³ Research indicates a favorable link between breakfast consumption and weight status, and school breakfast participation is associated with a lower body mass index (BMI), lower probability of overweight and a lower probability of obesity.^{4,5}

In New York State, the average school breakfast participation for the 2010-2011 school year was 41.4 students for every 100 students who ate school lunch. That number was even lower in New York City, a city that offers 100% universal breakfast; for every 100 students who ate school lunch, only 34.1 students ate school breakfast.⁶

Breakfast in the Classroom has been proven to greatly increase school breakfast participation⁶ and school breakfast is associated with reduced hunger^{7,8} and obesity⁵. By simply moving breakfast out of the cafeteria and into classrooms during the first 10 minutes of the school day, all students have access to a nutritionally balanced meal.

New York City health professionals, join hundreds of other health professionals in endorsing the benefits of the Breakfast in the Classroom program and urge New York City's School Administrators, City Officials, Department of Health and the Department of Education to support school's efforts to implement this program.

Sincerely,

Alanna Levine, MD
Spokesperson, American Academy of Pediatrics

Jane Lima-Negron, MSW
Executive Director
New York State Coalition for School Based
Health Centers

Christopher Phang, MD
Vice President, Empire State Medical
Association

Elyse Powell
DASH-NY

Lynne Holden, MD
President, Mentoring in Medicine

Marc Jacobson, MD
Pediatrician

Janice Shaw, RD
Co-President, Westchester/Rockland Dietetic
Association

Pia Dimarzio, MS, RD
New York State Dietetic Association

Mary Pegues, PA-C
Director, Renaissance School Based Health
Center

¹ New York City Coalition Against Hunger's Annual Hunger Survey. November 2011.
<http://www.nyccah.org/files/2011hungersurveyreport.pdf>.

² Hunger Solutions New York. Academic and Breakfast Connection Pilot: Final Report on New York's Classroom Breakfast Project. <http://hungersolutionsny.org/documetns/FinalABCupdated.pdf>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity in K-8 Students – New York City 2006-06 to 2010-11 School Years. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 12/16/11: 60 (49); 1673-1678.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6049a1.htm>.

⁴ Gleason et al. School Breakfast Program but Not School Lunch Program Participation is Association with Lower Body Mass Index. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2009;109;S118-S128.

⁵ Millimet DL, Tchernis R, and Husain M. (2009). School Nutrition Programs and the Incidence of Childhood Obesity. *Journal of Human Resources*. 45(3), 640-659.

⁶ Food Research and Action Center. School Breakfast Scorecard: School year 2010-2011. January 2012.
http://frac.org/pdf/school_breakfast_scorecard_2010-2011.pdf.

⁷ Bartfeld J, Kim M, Ryu JH, and Ahn H. The School Breakfast Program Participation and Impacts. *Contractor and Cooperator Report*. 2009. 54. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture.

⁸ Bartfeld JS and Ahn HM. The School Breakfast Program Strengthens Household Food Security among Low-Income Households with Elementary School Children. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2011: 141(3);470-475.

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TESTIMONY OF LOCAL 372 PRESIDENT SANTOS CRESPO, JR.,

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

**HONORABLE ROBERT JACKSON
CHAIRMAN**

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

Local 372 fully supports Breakfast in the Class Room Resolution 911 and Resolution 910

With so many families struggling to make ends meet and our schools trying to overcome deep budget cuts, the challenges of maintaining school employee job security and providing children with a quality education are substantial. Increasing student participation in school meals is a simple and sensible way to address these problems. The Breakfast in the Classroom program contributes to improved student health and academic achievement; and will generate greater federal reimbursement to schools and generate greater employment opportunities.

Local 372 represents over 25,000 school workers at the New York City Department of Education and works towards maintaining job security, creating jobs, and bettering the lives of both students and school workers. Local 372 members are also responsible to preparing the meals for these schoolchildren, ensuring that schoolchildren are learning ready and focused. Additionally our members live in the communities they serve and represent the families who will be positively impacted by these bills. We take our responsibility to our children seriously and are devoted to the wellbeing of all NYC children. Our members witness the negative effects of undernourishment each day. Children who are hungry cannot learn. This is why our union fully supports the expansion of breakfast at school.

Breakfast in the Classroom is designed to meet the critical physical and mental needs of children, and provide them with a healthy start to the school day. This all-inclusive, in-classroom breakfast model also removes the stigma and isolation that students can sometimes feel when receiving “free” breakfast at school. Expanding “Breakfast in the Classroom” to more classrooms and schools will therefore ultimately boost participation in school breakfast. . Anyone who stands against these bills is not interested in the wellbeing of NYC children. Our entire city should be behind this bill.

Providing children with a healthy breakfast in their classrooms will result in more students utilizing school meals. Educators will see positive results, including improved attendance, behavior, attentiveness and performance. That is why Local 372 fully stands behind Resolution 911 calling upon the New York City Department of Education to mandate breakfast in the classroom in every school in New York City and Resolution 910 calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation requiring all public schools to serve breakfast in the classroom.

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 910-A AND 911-A OF 2012



As participating organizations in the New York City School Meals Coalition, working to expand access to free school meals, we write in support of proposed Resolutions 910-A and 911-A, which support providing breakfast in the classroom in every school.



Ensuring children receive a nutritious breakfast through expansion of breakfast in the classroom would be a significant step to improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children, decrease childhood obesity, and receive more revenue from the federal government for the Department of Education (DOE).



Each day, schools across New York City offer universally free school breakfasts. They require no paperwork, forms, hassle, or cost to the students. Despite the simplicity of this process and the outreach efforts of the DOE's Office of SchoolFood to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP), New York City's participation has significantly lagged. According to a January 2012 report by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) on school breakfast participation in 26 large urban school districts across the country, New York City ranked last, with only 33.9% of the students receiving free or reduced-price (FRP) lunches also receiving free breakfasts.¹



The method that has shown itself to be the most effective in increasing participation in school breakfast is the implementation of breakfast in the classroom (BIC). As reported in the FRAC school breakfast study cited above, "districts serving breakfast in the classroom have the highest participation rates."² Evidence in our own city is consistent with this finding: at 23 schools offering BIC schoolwide in January 2012, the breakfast participation rate was 68% of all students.³ Yet because so few schools participate in BIC,⁴ and because even fewer offer it in every classroom, less than 4 percent of all DOE students receive breakfast in the classroom.⁵



By expanding breakfast in the classroom or the "grab and go" model in hallways, the Department of Education can:



- 1) **Improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children.** A study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reports that "evidence suggests that breakfast consumption may improve cognitive function related to memory, test grades, and school attendance."⁶ Nearly one in three children in New York City (30 percent, or 523,000) lives below the federal poverty level, a rate considerably higher than the national average of 22 percent.⁷ For children in families that are struggling to afford food, and thus often skip eating breakfast entirely, the single most effective health intervention is to provide nutritious school breakfasts.
- 2) **Decrease childhood obesity.** Research has linked regular breakfast consumption with lower rates of obesity. A study in the *Journal of the*

American Dietetic Association found “school breakfast participation was associated with significantly lower body mass index... [and] may be a protective factor, by encouraging students to consume breakfast more regularly.”⁸ Additionally, an analysis of 47 studies about the breakfast habits of children and teens came to the conclusion that “breakfast eaters generally consumed more daily calories yet were less likely to be overweight.”⁹ The USDA’s new nutritional guidelines for school breakfast reduce the minimum calorie requirement while significantly improving the nutritional content, presenting a real opportunity for DOE to offer students a leaner, more nutritious breakfast.

- 3) Receive more revenue from the federal government.** According to FRAC’s analysis, the New York City Department of Education would have collected \$50.95 million in additional federal funds, and served an additional 193,785 low-income students, if it met a 70:100 [FRP Breakfast: FRP Lunch] ratio during the 2010-2011 school year.¹⁰

We thank you for making time for this important topic on your committee agenda, and for holding a hearing on proposed Resolutions 910-A and 911-A. As organizations working together to expand access and increase participation in free school breakfast and lunch, we deeply appreciate your leadership today.

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- 1 “School Breakfast in America’s Big Cities: School Year 2010–2011.” Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). January 2012. http://frac.org/pdf/urban_school_breakfast_report_2012.pdf
 - 2 *Ibid.*
 - 3 Calculated using Jan. 2012 Breakfast in the Classroom Metrics Report from the Department of Education Office of SchoolFood. Only 23 of the 52 schools offering BIC schoolwide (*i.e.*, in all classrooms) have publicly available attendance data for Jan. 2012 (<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/attendance/default.htm>). Many of the schools offering BIC schoolwide that don’t post attendance data on the DOE website are charter schools.
 - 4 Jan. 2012 Breakfast in the Classroom Metrics Report. Of approximately 1,600 public schools, less than one school in four (352, or 22 percent) participate in BIC, according to statistics from the Jan. 2012 Breakfast in the Classroom Metrics Report.
 - 5 *Ibid.*
 - 6 Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, Adams J, Metz J. Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. May 2005. 105:5, 743-60.
 - 7 2010 American Community Survey. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau.
 - 8 Gleason, P. M. & Dodd, A. H. (2009). School breakfast program but not school lunch program participation is associated with lower body mass index. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109:2 Supplement, S118-S128.
 - 9 Rampersaud *et al.*
 - 10 FRAC.



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Testimony of

Triada Stampas

for the

Committee on Education

on

Resolution 910-A calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation supporting breakfast in the classroom in every school in New York City

and

Resolution 911-A calling upon the New York City Department of Education to support breakfast in the classroom in every school in New York City

June 20, 2012

on behalf of

Food Bank For New York City

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairperson Jackson, Council Member Levin and members of the Education Committee. My name is Triada Stampas and I am the Senior Director of Government Relations at the Food Bank For New York City. The Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council in support of proposed Resolutions 910-A and 911-A, which call for the support of Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) in all New York City public schools.

First, the Food Bank thanks the City Council for your longstanding attentiveness to school meals issues and your advocacy for expanding access to free school meals. Over the past several years, Speaker Quinn and many Members of the City Council have worked to promote BIC to schools in their respective districts and citywide.

In addition, the Food Bank thanks the City Council for your ongoing efforts to address the issue of hunger and ensure all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food. The City Council's consistent support for increasing enrollment of eligible households in the Food Stamp Program, advocacy to protect federal nutrition assistance programs in this year's Farm Bill, as well as funding to expand the supply of food available at emergency food programs are especially appreciated and needed as the recession has left elevated levels of food poverty in its wake.

Food Bank For New York City works to end hunger and food poverty by increasing access to nutrition, education and financial empowerment. Approximately 1.5 million New York City residents rely on our programs and services. We distribute food and provide support services to approximately 1,000 emergency and community food programs citywide; manage nutrition education programs for schools and community-based organizations (CBOs); operate income support programs including food stamp outreach & enrollment assistance and one of the largest Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs in the country; and conduct research to inform community and government efforts to end hunger in New York City.

Most relevant to today's hearing topic, the Food Bank also convenes the New York City School Meals Coalition, a multi-sector stakeholder group that works together to increase participation in school meals. Active participants in the School Meals Coalition include the City Council, the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator, the Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood, the United Federation of Teachers, the Council for School Supervisors and Administrators, Local 372 of District Council 37, anti-hunger and child welfare advocates, and community-based organizations. The Coalition's two main areas of focus are expanding access to universal school meals, and increasing participation in school breakfast, primarily through Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC). For the past two years, the Coalition has come together to develop a multi-pronged strategic action plan for increasing BIC participation that includes various forms of parent and school-based outreach, public education and stakeholder involvement.

Approximately three-quarters of the City's nearly 1.1 million public school children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.¹ The more than 700,000 students eligible for free school meals come from homes where the household income is, at most, 130 percent of the poverty level (almost \$24,100 for a family of three).² For those eligible for reduced-price meals, household income is no more than 185 percent of the poverty level (almost \$34,300 for a family of three).

As these numbers suggest, food poverty disproportionately affects households with children. In New York City, almost one-third (30 percent, or 523,000) of children are living below the federal poverty level (approximately \$18,500 for a household of three), well above New York City's average of 20 percent.³ Many of their families struggle to afford food. In 2011, 43 percent of New York City households with children reported difficulty affording needed food, considerably

¹ Food Bank analysis of New York City Department of Education Consolidated Claims Report, November 2011.

² *Ibid.*

³ *2010 American Community Survey*. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau.

higher than the citywide average of 35 percent.⁴ It should come as little surprise that this struggle is even more acute for low-income families: more than half (54 percent) of households with children and annual income less than \$25,000 had difficulty affording needed food; and these households were more likely than average to forgo purchases of healthy food, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, to stretch their grocery dollar.⁵

For these families, the nutritious meals provided every school day are an irreplaceable lifeline. On any given school day in our city, nearly 500,000 children receive a free school lunch; almost 50,000 have a reduced-price lunch for which they pay only a quarter.⁶ School breakfast, unlike lunch, is free for all New York City students. School meals meet nutrition guidelines set by the federal government and by the City of New York to ensure each meal is healthy, balanced and meets the needs of growing minds and bodies. While two thirds of all students (67 percent) receive a school lunch on an average day, fewer than one in four students (23 percent) participate in the school breakfast program.⁷ An analysis of New York City school meals participation data by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) finds that low participation is a phenomenon even among lower-income students; in the 2010-2011 school year, only 34 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price school lunch participated in school breakfast.⁸

WHY IS NYC'S SCHOOL BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION SO LOW?

Every one of New York City's public schools offers universal free breakfast in the cafeteria thirty minutes before the start of the school day. Given low breakfast participation, however, it is clear that factors other than cost are inhibiting participation. Chief among them are stigma, inconvenience and lack of awareness.

Eating Breakfast in the Cafeteria before School Starts Signals One Is Poor

Although school breakfast is free for all students, the way it is served – in the cafeteria before the start of the school day – effectively identifies low-income students and segregates them from their better-off peers, contributing to the stigma that attaches to poverty.

Getting to School Early for Breakfast Inconveniences Families

Many families' childcare arrangements and work commutes are scheduled around getting their children to school by the start of the school day. Arriving at school half an hour early can upset these arrangements, particularly if there is only one adult in the home or children of different ages who attend different schools and/or a child care program.

Offering Breakfast before the Start of the School Day Can Render It Invisible

Because breakfast is in the cafeteria, a part of the school building that most parents and students do not see at the start of the school day, many families may be unaware that school breakfast is free and available to them. Recent evidence suggests this is true: the Department of Education sent a targeted mailing of postcards advertising school breakfasts to approximately

⁴ *Hunger Experience 2011: Sacrifice and Support*. Food Bank For New York City. January 2012.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Food Bank analysis of New York City Department of Education Consolidated Claims Report, November 2011.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *School Breakfast in America's Big Cities: School Year 2010-2011*. Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). January 2012.

750,000 public school households in January 2012; by February 2012, breakfast participation was up eight percent compared to the same point the previous year.⁹

BREAKFAST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY

Ensuring every child receives a nutritious breakfast is a priority of the Food Bank and every member of the School Meals Coalition. An overwhelming scientific consensus exists that skipping breakfast and experiencing hunger inhibits children's ability to learn, and that regular breakfast consumption improves academic performance, student behavior and child health and wellbeing.¹⁰

Recent, reliable data about breakfast skipping among school-aged children is lacking, though both anecdotal reports and research suggest that a considerable number even of young schoolchildren arrive to school without having had breakfast. A study by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that included seven elementary schools that offer the traditional cafeteria breakfast service found nearly one in six students (15 percent) reported having no breakfast the day they were surveyed.¹¹ The study did not ask whether students had had dinner the night before.

Child hunger can be difficult to detect, even to those adults who have daily contact with children. A group of students at PS 241 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, who in December 2008 wrote letters to Santa Claus asking for food to keep their families from waking up hungry every morning shocked the principal, teachers and community members so much they reported it in the *Daily News*.¹² In outreach to principals and teachers about increasing school breakfast, we regularly discover school officials do not know how many of their students are coming to school without breakfast. Rigorous research into this issue is clearly needed.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM ADDRESSES KEY CHALLENGES

Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) is a way to provide all students with the opportunity to have a healthy breakfast in a way that addresses many of the challenges associated with low participation in the school breakfast program. With BIC, a bagged breakfast is delivered to first-period classrooms for distribution to students. Breakfast is eaten in the classroom at the start of the school day, typically when attendance is being taken.

In 2007, the Bloomberg Administration announced a goal of 300 schools participating in BIC. That goal was met last year, and as of March 2012, approximately 385 New York City public schools were offering BIC in at least one classroom; more than 80 schools offered it school-wide.

⁹ Letter from New York City Department of Education Chancellor Dennis Walcott and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Thomas Farley to Food Bank For New York City (among other organizations). May 14, 2012.

¹⁰ For a recent overview of the scientific literature, see FRAC's fact sheets "Breakfast for Learning" (Fall 2011; <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>) and "Breakfast for Health" (Fall 2011; <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/breakfastforhealth.pdf>).

¹¹ "In-Class Breakfast: Impact on Breakfast Skipping and Eating in Multiple Locations." G. Van Wye, H. Seoh, *et al.* New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

¹² "Santa letters from children at Brooklyn elementary school break hearts." Rachel Monahan. *New York Daily News*. Dec. 22, 2008.

BIC Does Not Identify or Segregate Poor Students

Because breakfast is served to all students in first period classrooms, no family need endure the shame or stigma associated with cafeteria breakfast – all students who want or need a breakfast can have it.

BIC Does Not Interfere with or Disrupt Families' Morning Schedules

Because BIC is offered at the start of the school day, it does not require families to change existing arrangements for transportation or child care.

REALIZING BIC'S FULL POTENTIAL

The Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood has worked hard to reach the goal set by the Administration in 2007, and the staff of the Office of SchoolFood continue to provide support to schools that choose to participate in BIC.

As currently implemented, however, BIC's potential is not fully realized. For one thing, its reach is limited. BIC is available in fewer than one in four schools (approximately 23 percent) and accounts for less than 18 percent of breakfasts served.¹³ It should come as little surprise that urban school districts that offer BIC more broadly, including districtwide, reach low-income students much more effectively. Newark (NJ), Houston (TX) and Washington, DC all offer broad BIC programs and boast breakfast participation of 65 percent or more among low-income students who participate in school lunch.

For another thing, its implementation is inconsistent. In some schools, BIC is offered schoolwide; in others, only in a few classrooms. This can create confusion for families when one child is in a classroom that offers BIC but another does not. When schools make the decision to implement BIC, the Office of SchoolFood works with cafeteria staff on-site to make sure implementation is smooth, but similar support is not provided to administrative staff so that communications to parents and students are clear and consistent.

Currently, principals have the authority to decide whether and how broadly to adopt BIC in New York City public schools, and while this is appropriate – not all schools are adequately equipped with refrigeration, have the electrical capacity or lack other capital needs – the reality is that without strong institutional support for BIC, expansion of the program hinges on the best efforts of the non-profit sector. While the non-profit community has made great strides to coordinate efforts through the School Meals Coalition and has been able to attract federal support from the USDA Hunger Free Communities grant for this work, the existing funding falls short of meeting the needs of all schools to participate in this program. This is not a long-term solution.

Resolutions 910-A and 911-A offer two mechanisms for institutional support for BIC expansion – State legislation, or proactive institutional support from the Department of Education. Either, or both, could lead to major gains in school breakfast participation, especially among our most vulnerable students. The Food Bank supports both Resolutions and calls for their passage.

Thank you.

¹³ As reported by the NYC Department of Education Office of SchoolFood at the June 19, 2012 School Meals Coalition meeting, 385 schools are participating in BIC, and in March 2012, BIC accounted for approximately 41,500 of the 237,000 breakfasts served.

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

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Name: AGNES MOLNAR

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I represent: COMMUNITY FOOD ADVOCATES

Address: 15 Maiden Lane

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Date: June 20,

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Name: Mark Dunbar Hunger Action Network

Address: 64 Fulton NY NY

I represent: Hunger Action Network of NYC

Address: to

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Name: JORI Belg

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I represent: NYC coalition Against Hunger

Address: 50 Broad, NY, NY

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in favor in opposition

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Name: Matthew Nulty

Address: 348 Atlantic Ave, Apt 3R, Brooklyn, NY 11212

I represent: Greater NY Dietetic Association

Address: ~~411~~ 31 Jane St, Apt 8F, NY, NY 10014

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Name: Louise Feld

Address: _____

I represent: Citizens' Cmt. For Children

Address: _____

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Name: Triada Stampas

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I represent: Food Bank For New York City

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