

School Breakfast at "Severe Need" Schools: AB 92

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»» ISSUE

Research has shown that school meals can make a strong contribution to children's good health and academic success. For low-income students, access to school meals may mean the difference between going to school well-fueled for learning and going to school with a stomach that's empty or full of junk food. Yet participation in school meals remains stubbornly low. One barrier to greater participation is access. Despite local, state and national efforts, not all California schools with a clear need for the school meal programs offer the School Breakfast Program. As a result, thousands of kids don't get the meals they need to learn and thrive.

»» NEED

The federal government defines schools where more than 40% of the students who participate in the school lunch program are low-income students as "Severe Need" schools and provides them with extra reimbursement for school breakfast. This policy reflects the federal government's belief that these schools have a special responsibility to serve breakfast, given the high demand among low-income students for lunch. Despite these incentives, and the availability of start-up funds to defray any initial school breakfast infrastructure costs, more than 1,000 schools in California are not serving breakfast. Given the links between good nutrition and academic success, the Legislature has a responsibility to close this gap in service.

In September 2006, the Governor signed AB 569 (Garcia), which directed the California Department of Education to identify the number of severe need schools not offering breakfast and report on the feasibility of a requirement. This report is due back to the Legislature by April 30, 2007.

»» REQUEST

CFPA requests the Legislature take the following action:

Action 1: Improve Breakfast Access	Require all schools identified as "severe need" to serve school breakfast.
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»» HISTORY

Numerous bills have aimed at requiring all, or a subset, of California schools to offer the School Breakfast Program. SB1041 (in 1999) would have required all schools with 75 or more low-income students to offer the School Breakfast Program, but the bill was vetoed by Governor Davis. AB 569 in 2006 sets the stage for action where other efforts failed by providing missing information that has made policy decision difficult in the past.

»» OUTCOMES

Schools identified by the AB 569 study as having significant numbers of low-income students with a demonstrated need for school breakfast will now offer both breakfast and lunch.