

Universal Free Breakfast Program.

What is the purpose of this placing this item on the workshop agenda?

The intent in coming before the board is to discuss the merits of the Universal Free Breakfast Program and gain support for the implementation of said program in the Flagler County School District.

A little history of the School Breakfast Program...

The School Breakfast Program (SBP), authorized by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, started as a pilot program to provide funding for school breakfasts in poor areas and areas where children had to travel great distances to school. The intent was to provide a nutritious breakfast to children who might otherwise not receive one. The importance of a nutritious breakfast is supported by several studies that have linked breakfast to improved dietary status and enhanced school performance. More recent research suggests that providing school breakfasts to low-income children is associated with the greater likelihood of eating a substantive breakfast, improved school attendance, and decreased tardiness (Pollitt and Mathews 1998; and Briefel et al. 1999). Less is known about the effects of school breakfasts on children's cognitive functioning and academic achievement, although some studies suggest that school breakfasts may lead to improvements in these outcomes (Briefel et al. 1999).

What is the Universal Free Breakfast Program?

In response to the body of evidence suggesting that school breakfasts provide dietary and educational benefits, many observers have urged that school breakfasts be more widely available. Within this context, Congress passed Section 109 of the William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-336). This authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), to conduct a demonstration and evaluation that will rigorously assess the effects of the Universal-Free School Breakfast Program (USBP) on program participation and a broad range of student outcomes, including academic achievement, school attendance and tardiness, classroom behavior and attentiveness, and dietary status.

Does this program exist in other districts?

The following Florida districts fully participate in the Universal Free Breakfast Program: Franklin, Brevard, Collier, Dade, Gadsden, Glades, Hendry, Hillsborough, Jackson, Jefferson, Putnam, Highlands, and Lee.

Note: With the exception of the above listed counties, we have the lowest breakfast prices in the state of FL. There are no other districts with our price structure.

How is this program funded?

The School Breakfast Program is a federally funded program structured in the same manner as the National School Lunch Program. For each meal served, funding is received from U.S.D.A. at the rate commensurate with the eligibility status of each student. Currently, the rates for the 2011-2012 school year are:

- Free- \$1.80
- Reduced - \$1.50
- Full-Price- \$.27

In addition to the federal reimbursement amounts above, Flagler County charges reduced-eligible students .25 and full-price eligible students .50. The funding structure remains the same for the Universal Free Breakfast Program; the sole change being the loss of the .25 and .50, per meal, we currently charge the students. There is further discussion regarding funding later in this document.

Note: For purposes of this document, the terms "Full-Price" and "Paid" are synonymous indicating the population of students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

How did the Universal Free Breakfast seed get planted in Flagler County?

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Department of Food and Nutrition Services applied for a grant through Action for Healthy Kids and Kellogg's, which was intended to assist school districts with increasing breakfast participation. Per grant guidelines, Bunnell Elementary School was chosen and working with the BES administration, an additional serving line and point-of-sale was introduced to assist with the anticipated increase in kids choosing to eat breakfast at school. It wasn't heavily marketed because of the unknowns of such a program; however, there was optimism for substantial participation increase due to several years of successful FCAT free breakfast days and the documented increases that we see on those particular days each year. This year, both WES and BTES aggressively worked to be able to implement the program in their schools. In addition, due to state legislation (which will be discussed further on) schools that have populations of over 80% free and reduced students MUST have Universal Free Breakfast. We typically don't consider Pathways its own school because in our operations, it's tied to FPC, both financially and technologically. This year, it was brought to our attention that Pathways should be considered its own site, thus, we were not in compliance with the mandate. These situations set off a firestorm of reactivity that has aggressively pushed the implementation of this program forward. The goal of the Food and Nutrition Services is to implement the program, District-wide before the end of the 2011-2012 school year.

What were the results of the BES pilot?

The following charts show the increase in participation and funding at BES between the 2008-2009 school year (before the pilot) and the 2009-2010 school year.

	08-09 Meal Counts	09-10 Meal Counts	Difference	% Change
Free	67498	75213	7715	11%
Reduced	12163	9770	-2393	-20%
Paid	19850	26949	7099	36%

Total 99511 111932 12421 12%

You can see from the above chart that there was an overall increase in participation. The decline in participation from the Reduced category may have more to do with the changing demographic of our population than in students in that category choosing not to participate. During those years, the increase in families qualifying for free meals began to sharply spike. It's no surprise the largest increase was in our Paid category.

The next shows the increase in funding received for breakfast at BES during the aforementioned time period.

	08-09 funding	09-10 funding	Difference	% Increase
Federal funds & cash	\$148,109.83	\$151,946.16	\$3,836.33	3%
Federal funds	\$135,144.08	\$151,946.16	\$16,802.08	12%
Cash	\$12,965.75		\$- \$(12,965.75)	

Interestingly, both participation and federal funding increased by 12%. This chart shows that although there was a loss of \$12,965.75 in cash received from the .25 and .50 charge for reduced-price and full-price meals, there was an increase of \$16,802.08 in federal funding received due to the increase in participation for a net increase of \$3,863.33. So to answer the initial question, it appears the pilot was successful in proving we could increase participation and funding by providing breakfast to all students at no charge.

Note: The amount of \$3,863.33 is conservative as it assumes all students who were required to pay the .25 or .50 actually paid it. Our student-debt policy is worth talking about as we move forward. Currently, if students do not have money, we will provide them with a reimbursable breakfast or lunch. We do not allow them to take a-la-carte items without appropriate funds. We work closely with families to educate them about our program, how it works and what their responsibilities are. We currently have no little recourse for families who fail to send money or provide their students with money, although, student debt has declined significantly in the past few years due to the diligent efforts of our administrative staff and managers. In other words, the difference in funding is likely a bit larger.

What about food and labor cost? They likely increase as well as the funding. Wouldn't that eat up the increase or worse, cost more than the funding received?

Food cost is a linear increase. That means that if it costs us \$1.00 to provide one breakfast, it costs us \$100.00 to provide \$100.00. There are bulk discounts built into our food pricing, but they are there, regardless of how much we buy. Currently our breakfasts range in cost from \$.63 to \$1.09 with our average being about \$.80. The goal in watching food cost is to keep our average well below the Reduced reimbursement rate, not including any cash we would collect.

Labor cost did go up slightly. You can estimate that an additional cashier every day for additional serving line would cost around \$2,700.00 (one hour X \$15.00 per hour (benefits included X 180 days). The fact is there is little labor involved in breakfast. Our managers are creative with their time and schools can significantly increase their breakfast production without additional labor. Where additional time is needed is in situations where an additional point of sale is required to ensure the academic schedule is not disrupted.

Other factors which support implementation of Universal Free Breakfast...

- By the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, each district school board must approve or disapprove a policy that makes universal-free school breakfast meals available to all students in each school in which 80 percent or more of the students are eligible for F/RP meals. Schools may opt out of the universal requirement only after receiving public testimony concerning the proposed policy at two or more regular meetings. Schools that implement the universal requirement must, to the maximum extent practicable, make breakfast meals available to students at an alternative site location outside the cafeteria. [FLA. STAT. § 1006.06]
- We have needy families with children attending all of our schools. There is a small disparity among our schools with regard to free and reduced percentages. At the end of last year, they ranged from 45% to 60% among 10 sites. Statistically, this means there are just single percentage points separating our schools from one another.
- All children need access to breakfast. Many children who may not qualify for free or reduced price meals are latchkey kids whose parent work and might not be there to cook breakfast in the morning before school.
- Taking away the cost factor removes the stigma of receiving free meals. All students are the same. Everyone receives a free meal.
- The "Equity in School Lunch Pricing" provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 is going to require us to raise lunch prices next year. This is a topic for another workshop. Free breakfast would be a nice trade off.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela L. Torres