



Legislative Testimony

Senate Bill 503: Breakfast After the Bell

April 17, 2015

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance

Prepared Statement of the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

Introduction

In February 2015, the Guinn Center (in collaboration with Nevada Succeeds) published a report titled, *Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?*, in which we examined the Breakfast After the Bell program. Based on our findings, we offer the following for consideration.

School breakfast can have a positive impact on student achievement and health

- Research suggests that eating breakfast at school helps improve children's academic performance [Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)].
- Access to school breakfast is positively associated with lower body mass index BMI (Gleason & Dodd 2009).

Breakfast after the Bell could help improve school breakfast participation in Nevada

- Nevada ranks 35th in the ratio of school breakfast participation to school lunch participation (FRAC 2015).
- In October 2014, only 35 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRL) participated in the School Breakfast Program.¹
- Currently, 58 schools in Carson City, Clark County, and Washoe County offer breakfast after the instructional day has begun through Breakfast After the Bell programs (which includes Breakfast in the Classroom and Grab and Go).²
- Table 1 reveals that schools participating in Breakfast After the Bell programs have higher breakfast participation rates than schools offering school breakfast in the cafeteria.
- As proposed to be amended, SB 503 requires schools with 70 percent or more FRL students to offer breakfast after the instructional day has begun, which would expand the program to approximately 160 additional schools.
- Conclusion: Expanding the Breakfast After the Bell program to schools with high FRL rates would likely increase breakfast participation rates and could positively impact student achievement and health.

Eliminating requirement to offer universal free breakfast could affect access

- As originally proposed, the program required eligible schools to offer universal free breakfast. The amendment removes the requirement that breakfast be offered for free. This means that some students would have to pay for breakfast. Some students may opt not to participate and there is increased chance for students who participate to be stigmatized.
- Some schools have programs in place that would mitigate the need for students to pay for breakfast.
 - In Clark, Elko, and Washoe County, there is no charge for reduced-price breakfast, so only non-FRL students would be required to pay for meals.
 - A total of 44 of the estimated 160 eligible schools (28 percent) already provide universal free breakfast through Provision 2, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and a program in Clark County that provides universal free breakfast at Title I schools.³

¹ Nevada Governor's Council on Food Security. National School Lunch Program Reports. January 27, 2015
http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory_Committees/Food_Policy_Council/Food_Council_Docs_2015/2015_0127_VIIA_NSLP_Reports.pdf

² Ibid

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Ability to provide universal free breakfast varies by school

- Large school districts likely have sufficient purchasing power and economies of scale to offer universal free breakfast under the program, even though all meals would not be reimbursed at the free breakfast rate.
- The difference between the cost to provide the meals and the reimbursement rate could be a loss for smaller school districts and charter schools.

Explore options to provide universal free breakfast under the Breakfast After the Bell program

1. Leverage private grant monies and utilize a portion of the proposed State grant to address the difference in reimbursement rates for free meals vs. reduced price meals and paid meals in small districts and charter schools.
2. Explore ways to reduce the fiscal impact of providing universal free breakfast in rural areas by pooling resources to increase purchasing power and sharing costs.

Table 1: Breakfast Participation at Schools with FRL Rate of 70 percent and Over in FY 2015

District	Schools with Breakfast After the Bell			Schools without Breakfast After the Bell		
	Number of Schools	Average Free breakfast Participation Rate	Average Reduced Price Breakfast Participation Rate	Number of Schools	Average Free breakfast Participation Rate	Average Reduced Price Breakfast Participation Rate
Carson	1	81.10	82.00	1	24.10	19.50
Clark	34	61.71	56.76	125	37.31	33.02
Elko				7	20.63	17.41
Humboldt				3	31.70	57.63
Lyon				1	85.10	84.90
Mineral				2	21.20	24.30
Nye				9	57.28	37.29
Pershing				1	45.80	28.00
Washoe	22	77.18	74.76	11	25.45	22.17
Total	57	68.02	64.15	160	36.84	32.39

Source: Analysis of Nevada Department of Agriculture Data

See full report: Examining Nevada’s Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?

<http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Guinn-Center-Nevada-Succeeds-Education-Priorities-FINAL.pdf>

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³ Nevada Governor’s Council on Food Security. Clark County School Universal Breakfast Schools. July 2014
http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory_Committees/Food_Policy_Council/CCSD-Universal-Breakfast-Schools.pdf