



February 18, 2009

81<sup>st</sup> Legislature

Senate Finance Committee

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## Article VI, Texas Department of Agriculture: Fund the Expansion of the School Breakfast Program

Last session, HB 4062 directed TDA to study the National School Breakfast Program and make recommendations to the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature for increasing participation in the program. Numerous studies before TDA's have explored the importance of eating breakfast at school. This research has shown that school breakfast improves academic performance, decreases behavioral problems, and improves children's nutritional health. Despite its documented value, only a little over half of all low-income students in Texas public schools eat school breakfast, when compared to those who eat lunch. Based on its study, TDA has recommended ways to increase school breakfast participation. The Legislature should help TDA implement these recommendations by funding school breakfast expansion initiatives.

- **School breakfast boosts academic performance and improves children's nutritional health.**
- **TDA recommends that low-income schools districts be encouraged to offer breakfast at no charge to all students and investigate alternative service methods for providing breakfast.**
- **Almost 19% of Texas school districts operate a "breakfast for all" program.**
- **Districts that offer universal free breakfast have increased breakfast participation.**

### TDA Recommendations from School Breakfast Study

House Bill 4062, 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature, directed TDA to estimate the cost of offering free breakfast to all students regardless of family income; analyze the link between school breakfast and academic performance and the impact of school breakfast participation on overweight and obesity; and identify best practices for expanding the school breakfast program in Texas. Based on its study, TDA recommended the following:

- Schools that have 60% or more student population eligible for free/reduced price breakfast should be encouraged to offer breakfast at no charge to all students and examine all available funding mechanisms.
- School districts should be encouraged to investigate alternative service methods for providing breakfast.
- School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) should be encouraged to find ways to increase breakfast participation in their local school districts.

### CPPPP Recommendation

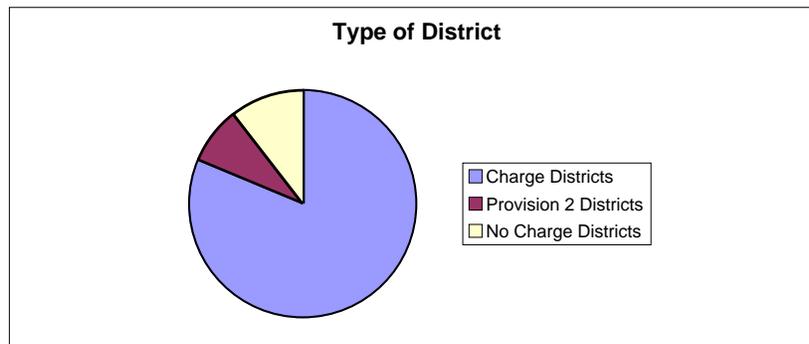
- Fund grants to help low-income school districts expand their breakfast programs by incorporating breakfast into the school day and/or offering breakfast free of charge to all students.

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## School Breakfast Participation in Texas: 2007-2008

We analyzed school breakfast data from 2007-2008 to compare participation across Texas school districts. Our analysis is largely focused on “low-income” school districts, which we define as districts in which 60% or more students receive free or reduced-price (FRP) breakfast/lunches (based on Average Daily Participation). We calculate the “breakfast participation rate” as the ratio of FRP students eating breakfast to those who eat lunch (again, based on Average Daily Participation). For example, a 50% breakfast participation rate means for every 100 students that ate FRP lunch, 50 also ate breakfast. Below are the findings of our analysis.

### **Nearly 19% of Texas school districts offer no charge breakfast to some extent.**



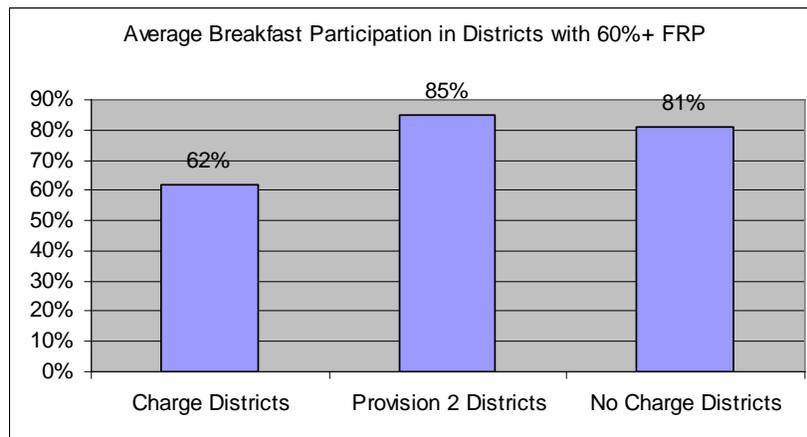
189 out of 1,020 Texas school districts (about 18.5%) offer free breakfast to all students regardless of family income (“no charge” or “universal” breakfast) or to a subset of students or schools in their districts:

- 10.5% (107) of districts offer some degree of no charge breakfast without using Provision 2.
- 8% (82) of districts offer no charge breakfast using Provision 2.<sup>1</sup>
- About 831 (81.5%) of districts still charge for breakfast according to federal income eligibility guidelines (“charge districts”).

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<sup>1</sup> Provision 2 is an option in federal law that enables schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs. Provision 2 schools do not have to collect and process school meals applications, keep track of meal categories, or conduct verifications for at least three out of every four years. Schools that opt for Provision 2 serve meals to all students at no charge. Provision 2 schools pay the difference between the cost of serving meals at no charge to all students and the federal reimbursement. The significant administrative savings of Provision 2 help offset the cost differential.

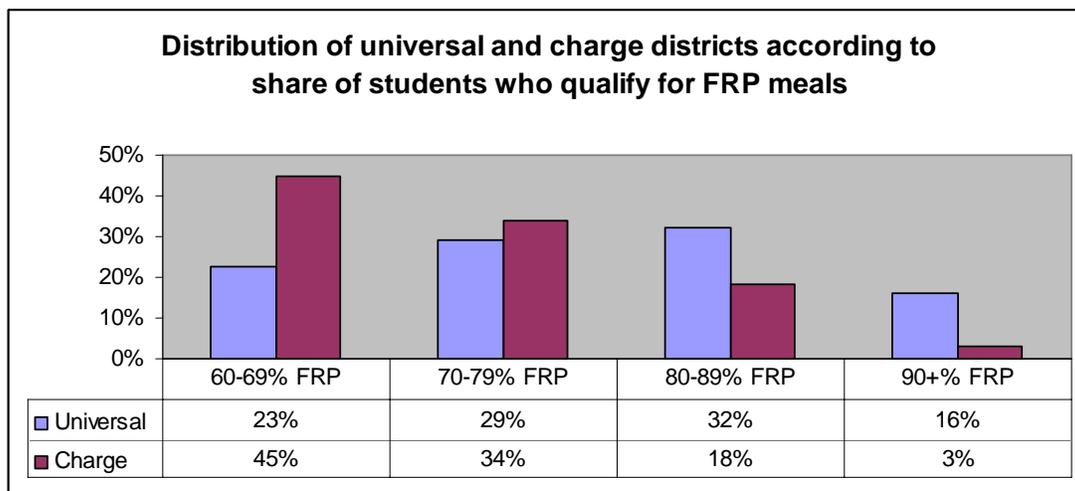
**Among low-income school districts (60% or more students receive FRP meals), the districts that offer no charge breakfast have a significantly higher participation rate than charge districts.**



Breakfast participation (calculated as the ratio of FRP students in breakfast to lunch) in low-income school districts (60% or more students qualify for FRP meals) is significantly higher in those districts that offer no charge breakfast (to all or some subset of students) than in districts that still charge according to family income:

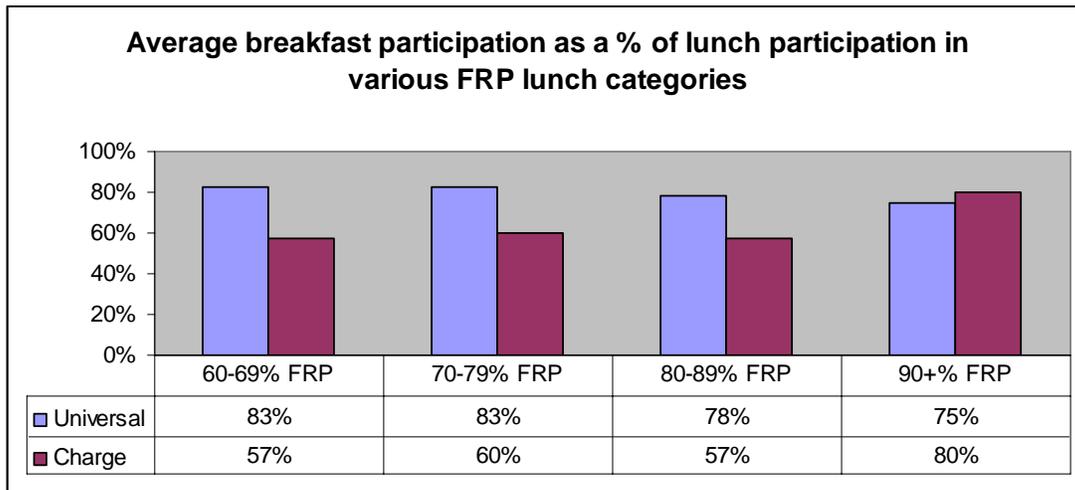
- Districts that offer no charge breakfast had an 80% participation rate compared to 59% in districts that still charge according to federal income eligibility guidelines.

**Low-income school districts that offer no charge breakfast have a higher concentration of students who qualify for FRP lunch than low-income districts that charge according to family income.**



For example, almost half (48%) of low-income districts that offer universal breakfast have 80% or greater FRP participation, compared to only 21% of charge districts.

**Offering no charge breakfast as a means to increase participation is as successful in districts with a lower share of low-income students than in districts with the highest share of FRP students**



Among no charge districts in which only 60-69% of students qualify for FRP meals, participation is still significantly higher than in comparable districts that charge for breakfast (83% vs. 57%). Participation in no charge districts in which 70-79% of students qualify for FRP meals is also significantly higher than in charge districts (83% vs. 60%), as well as at 80-89% FRP enrollment (78% vs. 57%). It is only among those districts with 90%+ FRP enrollment that breakfast participation is comparable in both no charge and charge districts: 75% in no charge districts vs. 80% in charge districts. This suggests that offering no charge breakfast as a means to increase participation is as successful in districts with a lower share of FRP students (60-70%) than in districts with the highest share of FRP students (90%+).

See <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=805&cid=3&scid=5> for breakfast participation by school district.

**Number of School-Age Children in Texas Potentially Eligible for FRP Meals**

Using the CPS data below as a proxy for the number of school-age children in Texas eligible for FRP meals:

- approximately 1.5 million or 28% of school-age children (4-18) may qualify for free meals; and
- approximately 666,000 or 13% may qualify for reduced-price meals.

	Sum	Percent
<b>Total Children ages 4-18</b>	5,373,212	
<b>Income-to-Poverty Ratio in 2007</b>		
<b>Below 50%</b>	510,542	9.5%
<b>50% to below 100%</b>	729,863	13.6%
<b>100% to below 125%</b>	289,410	5.4%
<b>125% to below 175%</b>	666,180	12.4%
<b>175% to below 200%</b>	203,841	3.8%
<b>200% and above</b>	2,973,376	55.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2008