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## TEXAS SCHOOLS LEAD NATION IN PROVIDING MEALS TO CHILDREN

AUSTIN—Ninety-nine percent of Texas schools participate in the national School Breakfast Program, ranking Texas 7<sup>th</sup> best in the country, according to a report released today by the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). The report, *School Breakfast Scorecard 2007*, also finds that more than a million low-income Texas children are eating breakfast at school. Despite its relative success compared to other states, there is room for expansion. For every 100 low-income children that participated in the School Lunch Program in Texas, only 53 also ate breakfast. Studies show that a good breakfast is essential to do well at school, but that children from low-income families are more likely to go to school on an empty stomach. Data broken down by school district are located at <http://www.cphp.org/research.php?aid=735>. To access the full report, visit [http://www.frac.org/pdf/SBP\\_2007.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/SBP_2007.pdf).

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FRAC's annual report rates state performance in the School Breakfast Program—a federally funded program that help schools provide children with free or low-cost breakfast. The report focuses on states' performance in reaching children in low-income families.

“Texas is doing an excellent job making sure that kids start the day right,” said Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “But we can do better. The key to increasing breakfast participation is to make breakfast part of the school day. This ensures that breakfast is convenient and accessible to all kids.” For example, the Houston Independent School District operates ‘First Class Breakfast’ in which all kids eat for free during first period. HISD also provides meals free to all students, which has also been shown to increase participation. At least 70 school districts in Texas offer “universal” free meals to students.

A bill passed during the 2007 legislative session (HB 4062) requires the Texas Department of Agriculture to study the most effective ways to increase participation in the breakfast program and deliver a report with recommendations to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the House of Representatives by October 31, 2008.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that eating a good breakfast is critical to classroom success. According to FRAC's report, eating breakfast can lead to higher standardized test scores, better grades in math and reading, and fewer behavioral problems.

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.