



PRESS RELEASE

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Breakfast in Baltimore: City Schools to Expand Breakfast with Better, Healthier Options; Boost Federal Funding with Greater Student Participation

(Baltimore, MD)—Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) is rolling out Breakfast in Baltimore, an expanded breakfast program marked by better meal options and a big push to get all students to eat breakfast in school. School-based breakfast is a critical step in ensuring that all of Baltimore City’s kids start each day off right—fed, focused and ready to learn. And there’s an added bonus: the federal government reimburses City Schools for all breakfasts served, so the more students that participate in breakfast, the more dollars for schools.

At today’s meeting of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, City Schools will unveil the centerpiece of its Breakfast in Baltimore program, nutritious, boxed breakfasts called Breakfast Breaks. Breakfast Breaks appeal to students with good food and fun packaging and prizes; they also make it convenient for schools to serve breakfast without interrupting their schedule or start to the day. The initial cost of Breakfast Breaks to City Schools will be approximately \$300,000, which it will recoup once the federal reimbursement kicks in, within six weeks of their launch in schools October 1.

“This is another important step in improving student performance in our schools,” said City Schools CEO Dr. Andrés Alonso. “The data is universal: well-nourished kids do well in school, and breakfast is the most important meal of the day. With a new and improved breakfast program that includes appealing options like Breakfast Breaks, more of our students will be ready and able to learn and achieve every day.”

Breakfast Breaks offer both students and school staff incentives to participate in, and encourage, breakfast in school. They come in biodegradable packaging and are available for eating before school, in the classroom without a mess, or between first and second periods. The boxes are purple and orange, the Baltimore Ravens and Baltimore Orioles colors, and one in every 20 contains a free music download, sports tickets or some other prize, ensuring a winner in every classroom.

“We need to get off the ground and get breakfast in our schools going,” said Anthony Geraci, Director of Food and Nutrition Services. “We need to drive participation. And we need to give

our kids more tools and our teachers more tools, because children who are fed are focused, and focused kids learn. Breakfast Breaks is just one option for breakfast, but it's one that is fresh, wholesome and hip, and will appeal to a large cross-section of students.”

While free breakfast has been available to all City Schools students in recent years, an average of 17,500 students a day partook of it last year, 22 percent of the eligible student population. Too many students were coming to school hungry and unprepared to learn. And because the federal government reimburses City Schools for breakfasts served, the school system was missing out on millions in federal dollars.

Research shows a powerful connection between breakfast and student performance. By appealing to more students and increasing the number of students who eat breakfast in school, Breakfast Breaks will improve academic achievement and classroom behavior, and increase the number of students who also eat lunch—keeping them well fueled for a full day of learning. And higher breakfast participation rates will significantly increase federal funding for City Schools. For each breakfast served, City Schools receives federal reimbursement dollars: \$1.68 for students who are eligible for free lunch, \$1.38 for students who are eligible for reduced price lunch, and \$0.25 for students who are ineligible for both free and reduced price lunch. Because of this reimbursement, the Breakfast Breaks program will both pay for itself and provide City Schools with a little money left over to further improve its food services programs.

In the coming months, Breakfast in Baltimore will also include hot breakfast for more students, as cooking kitchens are installed at schools. Currently some 54 schools have them and offer a hot breakfast option; the goal is to equip all 193 schools with the necessary equipment to prepare fresh meals daily for students.

Finally, Breakfast in Baltimore launches strategic relationships between City Schools and some key regional partners. Both the Baltimore Ravens and the Baltimore Orioles have committed to providing generous incentives to increase both student and school participation in breakfast. And the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council will give City Schools \$1.2 million to support Breakfast in Baltimore through grants to support Breakfast Breaks, to purchase new milk coolers for schools and to help fund a bottle recycling program.