

Bread and Justice Food Pantry/C.E.O.C.

11 Inman Street • Cambridge, MA 02139 • (617) 868-2900

City Clerk
Cambridge City Hall

RE: CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS CAMBRIDGE MA. July 31, 1992

Mayor Ken Reeves
Member, City Council Committee on Hunger
Chair, Cambridge School Committee

Dear Mayor Reeves,

I am writing to voice my concern over the underutilization of the Cambridge free/reduced breakfast program. In order to prepare for the Fall school program, it may be appropriate to begin developing plans for a well targeted approach to parents and children to involve those interested in the school breakfast program.

It is not too early to:

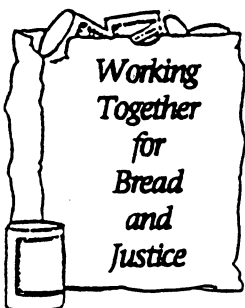
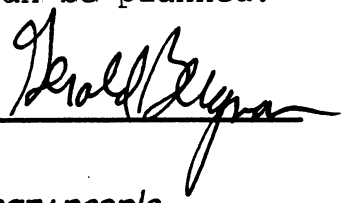
- a) assess bus transportation schedules to make certain that they do not negatively impact on the breakfast program;
- b) develop outreach materials that are translated into the necessary languages and appeal to various multi-cultural/multi-ethnic groups;
- c) develop empowerment tools which can involve parents and students in developing breakfast programs that are acceptable in regard to food content and manner of presentation;
- d) develop positive and upbeat food/nutrition campaigns that meet the current needs of students and parents;
- e) gain school department support for an integrated approach to nutrition education and school food programs that would meet the cultural and ethnic needs of students and which would involve teachers, parents and students in an empowering approach to good nutrition.

I am attaching a summary of a study of the importance of school breakfasts and some empowerment tools regarding developing the proper menus for school food programs.

I believe that with the involvement of those with concerns and expertise, and with the leadership of the School Department, School Committee and City Council, an outstanding food program can be planned.

cc. Ed Cyr, Hunger Committee
Tim Toomey, Hunger Committee

Sincerely,
Gerald Bergman



- Empower people in need
- Advocate for new laws and regulations that will help hungry people
- Expand public awareness of hunger and its root causes
- Feed the hungry

A HUNGRY CHILD CANNOT LEARN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUTRITION AND LEARNING

Hunger¹ and undernutrition² are growing problems among children in the U.S. because these conditions are directly related to poverty -- and the number of poor children is again on the rise. More than 33.5 million people in the U.S. lived below the poverty line in 1990, according to the Census Bureau. More than 20 percent of all U.S. children are poor. Government surveys show that as income decreases, so does the nutritional adequacy of diets. The poverty level itself is based in part on what it costs to purchase a minimally adequate diet. That means that families living at or below the poverty level are going to have a hard time buying even a minimally adequate diet.

While the impact of mild undernutrition cannot be easily measured, it can have serious effects:

- *Undernutrition increases the risk of illness and its severity.*
- *Undernutrition has a negative effect on children's ability to learn.* It is difficult to isolate and measure the effects of chronic undernutrition because many other aspects of poverty may negatively affect a child's development. However, the consensus of research in this area is that undernutrition does have an independent effect on learning and behavior.
- *The learning-related effects of undernutrition begin before any visible signs of growth retardation occur.* Undernourished children are less physically active, less attentive, independent, or curious. They are more anxious, less responsive socially and cannot concentrate as well. As a result, their reading ability, verbal skills and motor skills suffer. These effects do not have to be permanent if better nutrition is provided and the environment is improved.
- *Iron deficiency anemia is a specific kind of under nutrition, and one of the most prevalent nutritional problems among U.S. children.* Even mild cases lead to shortened attention span, irritability, fatigue and decreased ability to concentrate. Anemic children do poorly on vocabulary, reading, mathematical, problem-solving and psychological tests.

While most people would agree that hunger hurts children, hungry children often seem invisible, and resolving the problem of childhood hunger does not always assume a high priority. The results of a recent study indicates that millions of kids are hungry in America. Hunger hampers children's ability to learn:

- *Hunger leads to nervousness, irritability, disinterest in the learning situation and the inability to concentrate.* The hungry child is passive, apathetic, timid and

¹ Hunger is defined in *The Relationship Between Nutrition and Learning*, (NEA/FRAC, 1989) as a physiological and psychological state resulting when immediate food needs are not met.

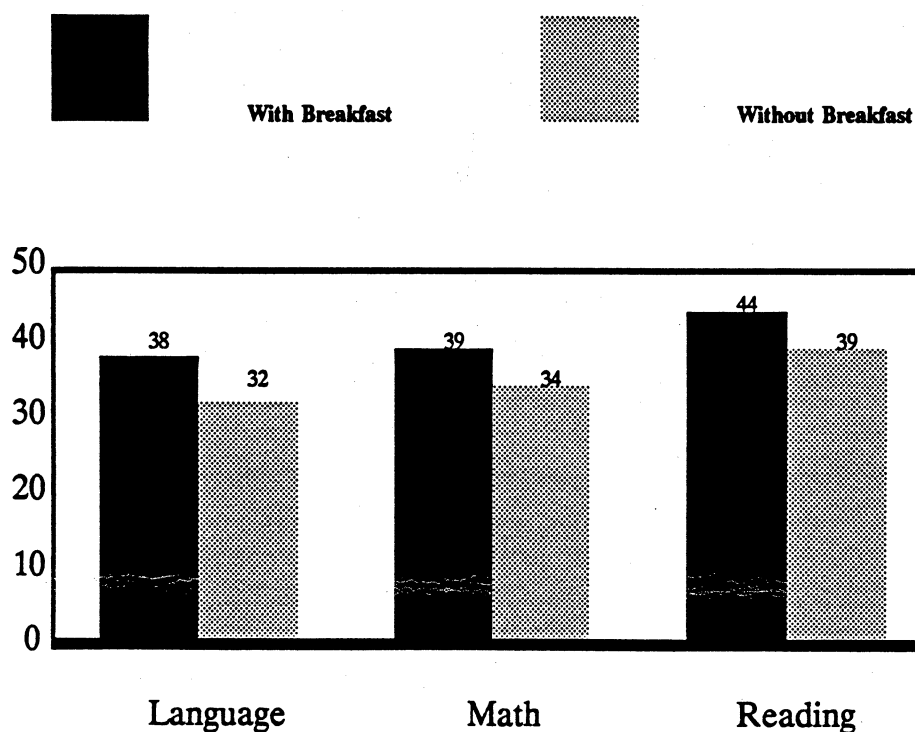
² Undernutrition is the physiological state resulting from a prolonged lack of food with specific symptoms that can be detected in height and weight, physical examinations and biochemical (blood) tests. It can be a problem of either quantity or nutritional quality.

- demands little from his environment.
Hunger probably has no permanent effects on the brain but it does disrupt the learning process -- one developmental step is lost and it is difficult to move on to the next one.

School Breakfast and School Performance

A 1987 study (*School Breakfast and School Performance*, Meyers, Sampson, Weitzman, Rogers, Kayne, *American Journal of Diseases of Children*, October, 1989) conducted in Lawrence, Massachusetts, showed that School Breakfast Program participation by low-income students is associated with significant improvement in standardized achievement test scores and tardiness rates, and a trend toward improvement in absenteeism. Previous studies had demonstrated a relationship between nutrition and learning, and federal surveys had shown that low-income students in breakfast programs tended to have better dietary intakes. The Lawrence study, however, was the first to connect the two findings.

**Lawrence Massachusetts Breakfast Study
Test-Score Increases on a 600-Point Scale**



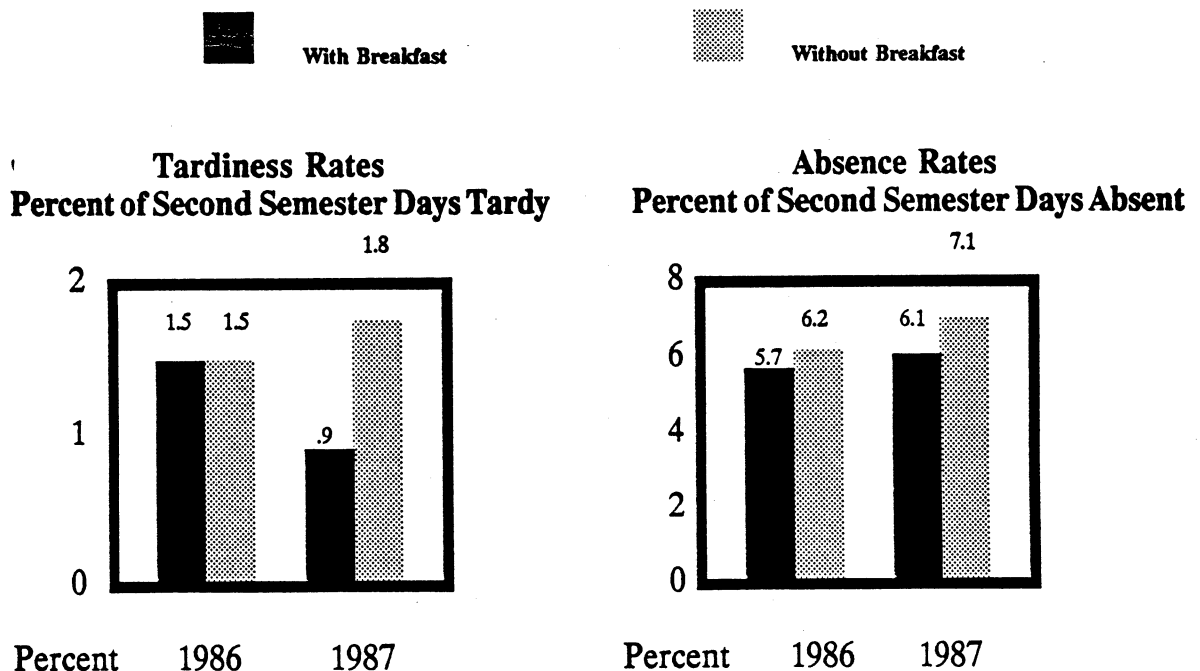
In this study, the achievement test scores of children in one year when their school had no breakfast program were compared with the scores of the same children in the following year when they participated in a newly initiated breakfast program. (Researchers took advantage of the opportunity presented by a 1986 Massachusetts law requiring that School Breakfast Programs be offered in any school with need -- where 40 percent or more of students eating lunch were eligible for free or reduced-price meals.)

The study compared low-income students participating in the School Breakfast Program with students not participating. Achievement test scores improved for both groups, as would be expected from one year to the next, however the increase was greater for

students participating in the School Breakfast Program. On a scale of 200 to 800, children who had received breakfast improved their scores an average of 48.4 points over the previous year, while those who did not receive school breakfast improved only 40.9 points.

The study also reported that participation in the School Breakfast Program was associated with decreased rates of tardiness. Absence rates increased for both groups, but the increase was less for School Breakfast participants.

Lawrence, Massachusetts School Breakfast Study



"In this study of the effects of a newly-implemented School Breakfast Program we have found a small but statistically significant positive association between participation in the breakfast program and improvement in standardized achievement test scores and in tardiness," the study reports. "These data do suggest that participation in the School Breakfast Program by low-income children has real benefits for their academic function, tardiness rates, and perhaps absenteeism," the report noted.



food in the morning

1. Did you have some food this morning? Yes ____ No ____
2. Do you usually eat food in the morning? Yes ____ No ____
3. If you do not eat a morning meal regularly, why not?
____ not hungry ____ not enough time
____ don't like breakfast foods ____ other
4. On days that you skip breakfast, how do you feel at mid-morning?
____ fine ____ hungry/starving ____ headache ____ tired/bored
____ angry/cranky ____ sick to my stomach ____ sad/bad ____ other
5. Which of the following did you include for breakfast this morning?

____ fruit or juice	____ pancakes or waffles	____ bagel
____ cereal with milk or cream	____ coffee/tea	____ fish
____ bread, toast, rolls	____ pop/soda/carbonated	____ egg roll
____ butter or spreads	____ beverages	____ pizza
____ tortilla	____ rice	____ grits
____ milk or cocoa	____ leftovers	____ quesadillas
____ cigarette	____ sandwiches	____ nothing
____ meat	____ eggs (kind)	____ other foods
	_____	_____

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES:

1. The thing that bothers me about eating food in the morning is _____
2. Eating breakfast would be more fun if _____
3. I feel best when I eat _____
4. The time of day I snack most is _____
5. I might be able to eat breakfast more often if _____
6. If I were stranded on a desert island, what five foods would I want to have with me? _____

¹ This survey form is reprinted courtesy of the Kansas Department of Education (with some modifications by author), and is included to provide an alternative format.

Sample Student Breakfast Interest Survey - I



Grade _____

Age _____

We would like to find out whether you usually eat breakfast and if you would like to have a breakfast program in your school every day. There no right or wrong answers. Please help us by answering these questions. Thank you.

1. Do you usually eat breakfast before coming to school? yes ____ no ____
2. If you usually eat breakfast:
What time do you usually eat? _____ a.m.
What do you eat for breakfast? _____
Do you fix your own breakfast? yes ____ no ____
3. What time do you get to school? _____ a.m.
4. Do you come to school by bus? yes ____ no ____
5. Do you buy food from the student store or vending machines before school? yes ____ no ____
6. Do you ever stop to buy food before school? yes ____ no ____
If you do, what kinds of food do you buy? _____
7. Do you usually eat lunch? yes ____ no ____
bring my own ____ go out to eat ____ eat school lunch ____
8. Do you usually eat dinner? yes ____ no ____
9. If a breakfast program were offered in school, it would provide milk, juice or fruit, cereal or bread (possibly muffins, tortillas, rice, toast, or pancakes), meat or other protein (such as eggs, cheese or peanut butter.) The breakfast would be free to the students who receive free lunches. It would cost 30 cents for students who receive reduced-price lunches. All other students would pay ____ cents.

If breakfast is available at school, about how many times a week would you eat? Check the number of times you think you might eat breakfast at school:

many times ____ once in a while ____ never ____

Sample Student Survey of Foods for Breakfast

Student Likes and Dislikes

Grade _____

Age _____

For all foods listed below place a check ☒ in any column to indicate how you feel about that food. You may check more than one column for each food.

FOODS	Like to eat	Don't like to eat	Never tried to eat	Would try to eat	Would never try to eat	Never heard of
Whole wheat toast						
Raisin bread						
Tortilla						
Dry cereal						
Oatmeal						
Grits						
Rice						
Cream of wheat						
Cornbread						
Muffin						
Biscuit						
Hash Browns						
Scrambled eggs						
Hard-boiled eggs						
Cheese toast						
Cheese (pieces)						
Quesadillas						
Peanut btr. sandw.						
Bacon/Sausage/ham						
Pizza						
Egg Roll						
Pancakes						
French toast						
Cottage cheese						
Carrots & celery						
Applesauce						
Orange juice						
Grape juice						
Tomato juice						
Grapefruit juice						
Apple juice						
Pineapple juice						
Orange halves						
Banana						
Strawberries						
Mango						
Cantaloupe						
Peach slices						
Pear						
White milk						

1. Name other foods you like to eat for breakfast _____

2. Name five of your most favorite foods you like to eat at breakfast time _____

Consent Comm. # 17

S-664

Comm. from Gerald Bergman, CEOC/Bread and
Justice Food Pantry, regarding the
underutilization of the Cambridge free/
reduced breakfast program.

In City Council,

Sept. 14, 1992

*Referred to the
Hunger Committee
Copy sent to Hunger
Committee 9/16/92 DE*