



# TESTIMONY

By

NEW YORK STATE ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature

Hearing on the FY 2018-19 Executive Budget

Submitted,  
February 7, 2018

On behalf of the New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (NYSAND), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Joint Fiscal Committee of the New York State Legislature in review of the 2018-19 Executive budget.

NYSAND is pleased that the 2018-9 Executive Budget includes policies that support healthy nutrition for New York's students. The "No Student Goes Hungry" packet of nutrition initiatives prioritizes healthy nutrition by recognizing the value of fresh local food products and accessible meals regardless of ability to pay.

## Breakfast After the Bell

NYSAND strongly supports the Breakfast After the Bell proposal and appreciates the funding appropriated in the Executive Budget to assist school districts with its implementation and operations.

The diets of most children continue to fall far short of recommendations for good health. The role of school breakfast in reducing hunger and improving health is critical. Almost one in five (19.5 percent) households with children struggle with hunger. It is difficult, if not impossible, for hungry students to learn.<sup>1</sup>

Many families in NYS face obstacles providing a healthy morning meal for their children each day. Tight budgets for low-income families and busy morning schedules can mean that many students arrive at school hungry and unprepared to learn. Fortunately, the School Breakfast Program plays a critical role in filling this void for low-income children every school day.

Research supports what educators and school officials see every day in our NYS schools - that a child who starts the day with breakfast is more likely to be at school, become a better learner and participate in the classroom. The various "breakfast after the bell" programs such as breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go" breakfast and "second chance breakfast" are increasingly popular in schools. The programs have successfully helped schools and districts improve students' access to nutritious foods.

Breakfast After the Bell has helped achieve the following improved outcomes in schools:

- GRADUATION RATES – Boosted by 20%
- MATH TEST SCORES – Increased by 17.5%

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.neahin.org/assets/pdfs/bic\\_toolkit\\_final\\_2014-for-web\\_reduced.pdf](http://www.neahin.org/assets/pdfs/bic_toolkit_final_2014-for-web_reduced.pdf)

- ATTENDANCE – Improved by 1.5 fewer absences per student per year
- STUDENT FOCUS – Ability to help every child concentrate on lessons, not hunger

Source: *breakfasteveryday.org* & *FRAC Report 2016*

“The school breakfast program is an effective way for children to get the nutrients they need to stay alert and focused in the classroom leading to a stronger ability to learn and overall more favorable educational outcomes. Students who participate in school breakfast show improved attendance, behavior, and academic performance as well as decreased tardiness. [They] perform better on standardized tests, have improved concentration, alertness, comprehension, memory, and learning, and reduced levels of food insecurity.”<sup>2</sup>

Another important benefit of the school breakfast program is that it can help lower the obesity rates among school age children. A USDA Economic Research study found that “by increasing the likelihood that children would eat breakfast, the school breakfast program was associated with children having a lower Body Mass Index (BMI), a measure of weight status”<sup>3</sup>

NYSAND supports increased availability and participation in school breakfast and encourages the NYS Legislature to make this one of their highest priorities, in order to reduce hunger and support the health and educational potential of all students, particularly low-income students.

## Expand the Farm to School Program & Farm-Fresh, Locally Grown Foods at School

Building on the success of the State’s existing Farm to School Grant Program, the 2018-19 Executive Budget appropriates an additional \$750,000 to fully fund the program at \$1.5 million. The Farm to School Grant provides assistance to schools by connecting them with local farmers and providing technical assistance to source local products.

In addition, the 2018-19 Executive budget includes enhanced funding reimbursement for lunches for any school district that purchases at least 30% of its foods from New York farmers and growers.

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<sup>2</sup> Food Research Action Center (FRAC) SCHOOL BREAKFAST SCORECARD – 2015–2016 SCHOOL YEAR (FEBRUARY 2017)

<sup>3</sup> School Meal Program Participation and Its Association with Dietary Patterns and Childhood Obesity. Mathematica Policy Research Inc., July 2009, MPR reference # 6297-420

Fewer than 10% of US children and adolescents consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.<sup>4</sup> NYSAND is dedicated to improving the fresh fruit and vegetable consumption of children in New York State. Increasing the availability of, and exposure to, fruits and vegetables will encourage healthy eating habits and improve the overall health status of children.

The US Department of Agriculture Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) increases consumption of fresh and total fruit and vegetable intake in school and fresh fruit and vegetable intake outside of school.<sup>5</sup> It is an example of a very successful Farm to School Program. This type of program has been successful in introducing school children to a variety of produce that children might not ever have the opportunity to sample. Research has shown that the environments in which we live, learn, and work can influence an individual's diet. Therefore, increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables, and decreasing the availability of unhealthy foods, may facilitate healthy eating among individuals.<sup>6</sup> Exposing children to fresh produce in schools is encouraging healthy eating habits and, over time, helping them learn how to maintain their health. FFVP is consistent with and supports the Institute of Medicine's recommendations to provide healthier snack choices in schools. The FFVP also encourages healthier school environments by promoting nutrition education. Through this program, children learn that eating fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy choices and tasty alternatives to snacks high in fat, sugar, or salt.

Farm to School programs have encouraged policies that leverage food purchases from local farms. Such policies have become valuable to local communities due to their potential to foster healthy eating in addition to boosting local economies. The "farm-to-table" strategies and Farm to School programs have also encouraged participation at farmers' markets and the development of community gardens.

Farm to School programs can have a significant impact not only in schools, where there is evidence of increasing the fruit and vegetable intake by students, but also in the ability to help support local farmers and lower the carbon footprint. Farm to School and fresh fruit and vegetable programs can create connections to schools with local farms and food producers to

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<sup>4</sup> Increasing Child Fruit and vegetable Intake: Findings from the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Program. Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, August, 2015 Volume 115 Number 8

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program-2017>

<sup>6</sup> Richards R. Food store access and household fruit and vegetable use among participants in the US Food Stamp Program. Public Health Nutr. 2004;7(8):1081-1088.

Kubik MY, Lytle LA, Hannan PJ, Perry CL, Story M. The association of the school food environment with dietary behaviors of young adolescents. Am J Public Health. 2003;93(7):1168-1173.

strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness. The goal of Farm to School Programs is also to increase consumption of local produce to achieve more positive health outcomes, increase the variety of local products being offered on school menus, increase the number of local farmers selling to schools, and raise awareness of the local food system to the communities in the area. All are positive outcomes for the schools, children, local farms and the communities.

## Ban Lunch Shaming Statewide

Finally, the 2018-19 Executive budget includes legislation to ban lunch shaming practices in all schools. This would include banning alternative lunches (e.g., a cold cheese sandwich) to students who cannot pay at the point of services. School lunches are regulated to ensure that they meet healthy nutritional requirements. They are balanced and carefully developed by school nutritionists, many of whom are Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. NYSAND supports policies that ensure that all students have access to high quality nutritious foods and appreciates the intent of this proposal.

The New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding the 2018-19 Executive Budget.

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NYSAND is an organization nutrition professionals, residing, working or attending school in New York State. Affiliated with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, NYSAND has over 5,000 members. There are ten district associations within NYSAND, covering all regions of the state, from Long Island to Plattsburgh, to the far reaches of the Southern Tier.

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