

## **Kent Elementary – A Breakfast Participation Success Story**

### **A "How to" Approach**

Kent Elementary teamed up with the Rotary Club of Columbus and Children's Hunger Alliance in the fall of 2001 in order to tackle low breakfast participation. **Eating breakfast has been proven to have a direct correlation with reducing barriers to successful learning such as hunger, tardiness, truancy, and low testing scores.**

In March 2002, Kent Elementary achieved a steady 96 percent breakfast participation rate, from a preliminary rate of 60 percent. This amazing feat was achieved due to the strong organization and drive of key collaborators, cooperation of school staff and successfully engaging students to participate in initiatives.

This is a how-to guide on implementing the different programs that Kent piloted to increase school breakfast participation and may be duplicated to fit the needs of your school.

#### Partners

- **KENT ELEMENTARY** – school where this project was piloted. Provided on-site project organizer, as well as classrooms, teachers and children for programming.
- **ROTARY CLUB OF COLUMBUS** – service organization that provided the funding (\$600) to implement these programs, as well as support in the form of volunteers, resources and donations from its active members.
- **CHILDREN'S HUNGER ALLIANCE** – non-profit anti-hunger organization that brokered the project and administrated the project both financially and programmatically; provided constant staff support to implement programming, provide resources and purchase supplies.

#### When?

- This program was piloted in School Year 2001-2002.

#### Who?

- The on-site coordinator of this project was Melissa DeFilippo, school breakfast supervisor and reading specialist. Melissa estimates that the projects below took her about 40 minutes daily (30 minutes as breakfast monitor, 10 minutes to take "breakfast" attendance in the classrooms). In terms of prize distribution, it took Melissa one and a half hours each week to tabulate the participation percentages for each student and classroom and to distribute prizes.

#### Goal

- To increase breakfast participation at Kent Elementary

#### How?

- Listed below are the several different projects piloted and what resources were necessary.

## **BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM**

The typical morning schedule of the classrooms at Kent Elementary is to have each classroom teacher gather their students from the playground, take class and lunch attendance while still outside then lead the students into the classroom. This process can take 5-10 minutes. Breakfast in the classroom simplifies this process, as the students are marked for both school attendance and lunch attendance with ease in the classroom. Breakfast in the classroom has spread to several classrooms, originally starting with four classrooms and increasing to nine. This has been a result of positive peer role-modeling.

### **FACTS AT KENT ELEMENTARY**

- Breakfast in the classroom occurs in 9 out of 15 classrooms -two kindergarten, two first-grade, one second-grade, one third-grade, two fifth grade and one Severe Emotional Development class.
- 64 percent of total children eating breakfast at Kent are eating breakfast in the classroom.

### **IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:**

- Teachers must be in the classroom by 8:30 a.m. to provide supervision for the program (8:45 a.m. is the start of the day bell – 9:00 a.m. is the tardy bell).
- A trashcan is placed outside of the door in order to eliminate food garbage and leakage in the classroom.
- Students pick up their breakfast first thing upon entering the building and go directly to their classrooms.
- Students pull out their laminated placemats – with original artwork on the importance of breakfast, which are used to protect their desks while they eat.

### **BENEFITS**

- Tardy students are also given a chance to eat.
- Parents and siblings are given the chance to eat with their student in a relaxed, nutritionally educational environment. This promotes healthy family eating and parent-school-child bonding.
- Teachers have the opportunity to connect with their students on a more personal level in the morning when teachers and students are concentrating on academics.

- Children are able to put personal belongings away, talk with friends and then take their seats during breakfast time. This leaves children more relaxed to begin class time.

## TEACHER INCENTIVES

Teachers who administered breakfast in their classroom were rewarded in two special ways:

- They received gift certificates to local dining establishments from the local Rotary Club in appreciation of their efforts.
- Teachers were served breakfast by Rotary Club members dressed to the "T" in tuxedos. The Rotarians also cooked the sausage and waffle breakfast for these teachers to show appreciation for their efforts to increase breakfast participation. Participating teachers also received a beautiful personalized "apple plaque" from the Children's Hunger Alliance. The local press was invited to this event as well as Ohio's First Lady Hope Taft, Principal Erma Taylor, and representatives from the Columbus Public Schools Superintendent's Office, the Ohio Department of Education, Children's Hunger Alliance, Columbus Rotary Club and the Columbus Public Schools Food Service.
- The teacher of the classroom with the lowest breakfast attendance made hot breakfast for the winning classroom with the highest breakfast attendance.

## INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION

Students who had 100 percent breakfast attendance at the end of the week received a small award to encourage participation. If a student had 100 percent attendance for multiple weeks, he or she would receive more significant prizes, such as hats and T-shirts donated by the American Dairy Association.

## FACTS:

- Prizes ranged from cut-out stars that stated, "I started the day out right", with a small piece of candy attached, to pens, erasers and other school supplies, to hats and T-shirts. The level of prizes increased as consecutive weeks of participation increased.
- This is done for students who participate in both breakfast in the classroom (teachers tally), and students who eat in the cafeteria (breakfast coordinator tallies).

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Prizes of all sorts are purchased (pens, erasers, pencils, markers, etc.).
- Teachers take daily breakfast attendance on pre-printed sheets in laminated manila folders.

- Attendance is taken of students who are eating breakfast and have arrived on time.
- Teachers drop attendance sheet in breakfast program coordinator's mailbox on Fridays.
- Breakfast coordinator tallies the numbers and creates percentages.
- Prizes are awarded to children with 100 percent attendance on Friday afternoons and announced by the teacher in front of the classroom.

#### BENEFITS

- This program puts the accountability for timeliness and breakfast participation on the student, who is encouraged to arrive on time and eat breakfast.
- Announcing prize recipients within the classroom is an incentive for students to succeed and try harder the following week if they have not reached 100 percent.

#### INCENTIVES:

- Children who have eaten at home are recognized and given the opportunity to "count" in this program, since Kent wants all their students to feel good about eating breakfast. These students must arrive to school on time to be counted.
- Students, who receive the "I start the day off right" star, can proudly display these in their classrooms by posting them on the door, creating a classroom graph or taking them home.
- Kent implemented the concept of "Birthday Prizes" – distributing small "presents" to students who attend school and eat breakfast on their birthdays. Students are encouraged to attend school on their birthdays, since this day is often missed with unexcused absences. Kent is thinking of taking this one step further by announcing the student's birthday during breakfast/morning announcements and providing a small birthday card with a word about breakfast, to drive home the meaning of this program. (Children who celebrate their birthday in the summer can receive their prize on the last day of school).
- Kitchen staff can complete paperwork if the breakfast coordinator is short on time, since kitchen staff has a count of breakfasts distributed.

#### **CLASSROOM COMPETITION**

Breakfast attendance is tallied in each classroom every week, and classrooms with 70 to 90 percent attendance receive a white ribbon that says, "We Start the Day Off Right". Classrooms with 90 percent or higher attendance receive a blue ribbon with the same slogan. Students who have eaten at home are given the opportunity to let their teacher know and be counted as well. Teachers and students proudly display these ribbons outside their classrooms.

#### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

- "We Start the Day Off Right" ribbons are purchased in two different colors.
- Teachers take daily attendance with pre-printed attendance sheets.
- Breakfast coordinator tallies up classroom participation percentages.
- The breakfast coordinator takes attendance of the children who eat in the cafeteria.
- Ribbons are distributed on Fridays, along with individual incentives.

#### BENEFITS:

- The classroom sets a collective goal regarding breakfast participation.
- The classrooms can engage in friendly competition and proudly display their achievements outside their door.
- Distributing rewards on Friday allows the students to think about starting off "right" the following Monday.

#### INCENTIVES:

- Tallying percentages of each classroom allows the breakfast coordinator to come up with a percentage for the entire school, thus tracking the progress of the entire school and the effectiveness of the program.

#### **"YOU GOT CAUGHT BEING/DOING GOOD"**

One student from each classroom (15 classrooms total), who has displayed excellent behavior all week, will receive a pass entitled "You Got Caught Being/Doing Good." This pass invites the student to attend a special sausage and waffle breakfast on Fridays, which is prepared by the Assistant Principal of the school. Students love this program, since it honors them and encourages them to "be/do good".

#### FACTS:

- The Assistant Principal, who will interact with these students, prepares breakfast.
- A separate specially-decorated table is reserved for those caught being/doing good.
- Music may be played during this time.

#### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

- Items purchased include sausages, waffle mix, napkins, silverware, & paper plates.
- Two waffle irons are used to serve waffles in a timely manner.
- Electric skillet is used to heat up the pre-cooked sausage.
- Juice and milk are served.

#### BENEFITS

- Students are awarded for exceptional behavior and others strive to receive this honor.
- School administration shows appreciation for these students with this program, while interacting with the students on their level.

#### INCENTIVES:

- School Principal may also stop by to congratulate these students.

#### **"WHY SCHOOL BREAKFAST IS IMPORTANT" POSTER CONTEST**

Students are given the opportunity to design a poster explaining why school breakfast is important. These posters are displayed in the gymnasium for all to see, with prizes awarded to the most creative artists.

#### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

- Purchase poster board.
- Cut poster board in half and distribute to all students interested in participating.
- After students have designed their posters, collect, laminate and print their name and classroom number on the backside.
- Posters are displayed in the gymnasium and voted on by students.
- Students receive prizes for participation, as well as larger prizes for the top three winners.
- Winning posters are displayed in the school in a prominent location.

#### INCENTIVES:

- Winning posters can be copied and submitted to local art contests.

#### BENEFITS:

- This contest was originally designed as a classroom competition, but individual students were so interested in designing their own posters, the contest was opened up to the whole school.
- Kids have taken this project home to work on with their families, increasing family involvement in both school and the breakfast program.

## **FUTURE INITIATIVES**

### **Parent – Child Breakfast**

To encourage parents to eat breakfast with their children on Wednesday mornings, Kent Elementary has agreed to invite parents for breakfast and pay for their meal beginning school year 2002-2003.

### **School Kick-Off Rally**

Kids should have the opportunity to get excited about breakfast from the first day of the school year. A school breakfast rally should be held to reiterate the importance of breakfast from the previous year, and to explain the different programs that will be implemented and the incentives available.

### **Second Cup of Coffee**

Many schools have had success reaching out to parents through informal school "chat" programs. "Second Cup of Coffee" evolved as a way to encourage parents who dropped their children off each morning to begin to get to know school staff better. In some schools, on "Second Cup of Coffee" days, a coffee urn is rolled into the vestibule of the school and Family Focus Team members invite parents for a second cup of coffee. Team members often linger to chat and informally promote upcoming events and projects. In other schools, a more formal "Second Cup of Coffee" has evolved in which biweekly or monthly parent meetings take place with speakers and projects of interest to parents. This is also an important opportunity for parents to sit down with children while they eat breakfast.

## **WHAT STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAID ABOUT BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM AT KENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **KENT ANECDOTES**

*"I like having the children eat breakfast in the classroom. There is less fighting, better behavior and appropriate levels of socialization between the children."*

- SED (Severe Emotional Development) Teacher

*"Having breakfast in the classroom establishes an important routine in the classroom which leads to children being more calm, and bonding with each other."*

- Kindergarten Teacher

*"The breakfast program at Kent has decreased tardiness and absenteeism and is a vital part of making or breaking a student's day. This is why I am so involved."*

- Melissa DeFillipo, Reading Specialist, Breakfast Program Coordinator

*"None of my students complain of hunger."*

- First-Grade Teacher

*"I can relate to my students on a more social level in the morning."*

- Fifth-Grade Teacher

*"I like it because it helps me remember to eat in the morning."*

- Student, Age 7

*"I like earning prizes such as journals, school supplies and ribbons."*

- Student, Age 9

*"Rotary's initial focus in working with Kent was on improving reading and writing skills. The Children's Hunger Alliance quickly demonstrated to us that hungry children couldn't learn as well as those who start the day right with a nutritious breakfast. Supporting the breakfast program is now an important and integral part of what we do with Kent."*

- Bill Matthews, Rotary Club of Columbus

*"Kent pulled together as a school to accomplish the amazing feat of 96 percent breakfast participation. I believe this level of participation has positively affected Kent in so many important and fundamental ways."*

- Cydney Singer, Ohio Children's Hunger Alliance

*"The breakfast program is a success, not only with the students, but with teachers and administrators as well. Everyone wins!"*

- Rachael Hawkey, Americorp member