

# Children Participating in School Breakfast

## DEFINITION

*Children participating in school breakfast* is the percentage of low-income children who participate in the School Breakfast Program. Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for and enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The School Breakfast Program helps ensure that the nation's most vulnerable children start their day off with a healthy meal. During the 2014-2015 school year, 11.7 million low-income children in the U.S. participating in the School Breakfast Program ate breakfast at school each day, continuing a pattern of steady year-over-year growth in student participation over the past decade.<sup>1</sup> The School Breakfast Program offers nutritious meals which, together with school lunches, make up a large proportion of the daily dietary intake of participating children.<sup>2</sup> The School Breakfast Program helps schools support academic success and improved attendance, behavior and health, including reduced obesity rates.<sup>3</sup>

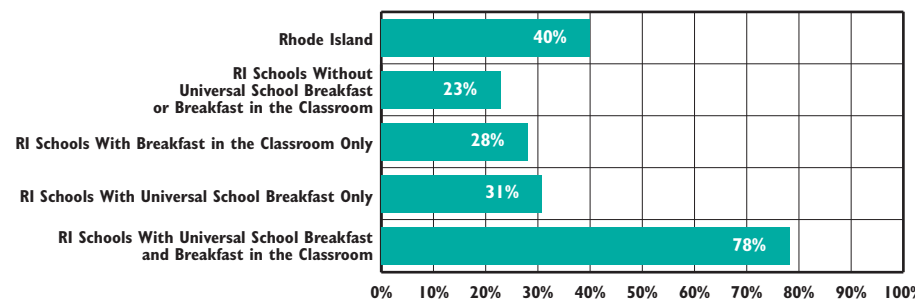
Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts every morning, and children in these families are at risk of falling behind their peers physically, cognitively, academically, emotionally, and socially. Children who are

undernourished are more likely to have poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast. They are more likely to have behavior, emotional, and academic problems, more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended.<sup>4,5</sup> Nationally, kindergarteners in households experiencing food insecurity are more likely to be chronically absent than their peers in food-secure households.<sup>6</sup>

Rhode Island law requires that all public schools make breakfasts and lunches available to all students, including students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on their income (less than 130% of the federal poverty level for free meals and between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals).<sup>7,8</sup>

During the 2014-2015 school year in Rhode Island, 51 low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 low-income students who participated in the School Lunch Program. Rhode Island ranks 30th in the U.S. for participation in the School Breakfast Program, down from 28th last year. If Rhode Island increased low-income student participation in the School Breakfast Program from 50% to 70% of School Lunch Program participation, the state would receive \$2.7 million in additional federal funds to support the School Breakfast Program.<sup>9</sup>

**Low-Income Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2015**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of School Food Services, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2015.

- ◆ **Universal School Breakfast Programs, which provide free breakfast to all children regardless of income, increase school breakfast participation by removing the stigma often associated with school breakfast and can reduce administrative costs.<sup>10,11</sup> During the 2015-2016 school year, all schools in Central Falls, Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket, selected schools in three other districts, nine charter schools, and the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program offered universal school breakfast.<sup>12</sup>**
- ◆ **Making breakfast part of the school day is another proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation, reducing stigma, and increasing convenience.<sup>13,14</sup> During the 2015-2016 school year, several districts offered breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go” breakfasts, bagged breakfasts, or breakfast on a cart in all or some of their schools.<sup>15</sup>**
- ◆ **The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools and districts with high poverty rates to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students who have been identified as low-income by another program (e.g., SNAP) or are at risk of hunger (e.g., they are homeless). During the 2015-2016 school year, nine of the 98 eligible schools in Rhode Island were using CEP.<sup>16</sup>**
- ◆ **During the summer, many low-income children lose access to the free and reduced-price meals they rely on during the school year. In Rhode Island, 17% of the children who participated in the School Lunch Program during the 2013-2014 school year participated in the 2014 Summer Nutrition Programs. During July 2014, 164,867 lunches were served through Summer Nutrition Programs, a 22% increase over the previous year.<sup>17</sup>**

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Table 14.

## Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2015 ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	# OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	ESTIMATED LOW-INCOME AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,328	29	1%	196	*	4%
Bristol Warren	3,328	162	5%	1,100	144	13%
Burrillville	2,383	200	8%	724	151	21%
Central Falls**	2,657	1,382	52%	2,144	1,217	57%
Charlho	3,237	228	7%	661	148	22%
Coventry	4,750	391	8%	1,558	331	21%
Cranston**	10,441	2,655	25%	4,673	1,510	32%
Cumberland	4,552	528	12%	1,105	382	35%
East Greenwich	2,455	63	3%	144	36	25%
East Providence	5,282	1,177	22%	2,861	874	31%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,638	68	4%	212	39	18%
Foster	277	12	4%	61	*	10%
Foster-Glocester	1,155	47	4%	203	35	17%
Glocester	545	60	11%	73	47	64%
Jamestown	496	22	4%	47	12	26%
Johnston	3,217	358	11%	1,543	301	20%
Lincoln	3,012	187	6%	794	153	19%
Little Compton	243	*	1%	33	*	3%
Middletown	2,287	144	6%	642	117	18%
Narragansett	1,321	77	6%	247	57	23%
New Shoreham	113	12	11%	18	*	33%
Newport	2,173	424	20%	1,389	388	28%
North Kingstown	4,017	253	6%	899	193	21%
North Providence	3,562	488	14%	1,431	359	25%
North Smithfield	1,729	115	7%	314	77	25%
Pawtucket**	9,022	2,102	23%	6,855	1,794	26%
Portsmouth	2,480	124	5%	354	80	23%
Providence**	23,867	12,994	54%	18,848	11,811	63%
Scituate	1,366	41	3%	258	26	10%
Smithfield	2,390	105	4%	339	57	17%
South Kingstown	3,249	181	6%	715	154	22%
Tiverton	1,843	118	6%	571	89	16%
Warwick	9,140	691	8%	3,032	541	18%
West Warwick	3,485	564	16%	1,705	474	28%
Westerly	2,908	376	13%	1,018	335	33%
Woonsocket**	5,908	2,762	47%	4,231	2,035	48%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>6,270</i>	<i>2,731</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>4,554</i>	<i>2,232</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,747</i>	<i>341</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>1,097</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>29%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>92%</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>83%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,454</i>	<i>19,240</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>32,078</i>	<i>16,857</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>92,402</i>	<i>9,903</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>28,920</i>	<i>7,131</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>142,014</i>	<i>32,345</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>66,763</i>	<i>26,635</i>	<i>40%</i>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, October 2015.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

\*\*These districts offer Universal School Breakfast in all of their schools.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, the Rhode Island Training School operated by DCYF, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

The October 2015 enrollment and number of low-income students come from RIDE's official October 1 enrollment census. Data are not comparable to Factbooks prior to 2011.

"Estimated Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2015. "Estimated Low-Income Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced-price meals who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2015.

Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program. To participate in the Reduced-Price Breakfast Program, students' household income must fall between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty guideline. For the Free Breakfast Program, household income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guideline. Children in foster care, households receiving SNAP Benefits and households participating in the Rhode Island Works Program are automatically eligible for free meals.

References are on page 173.