

# 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 2017-2018 school year, 12.5 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>

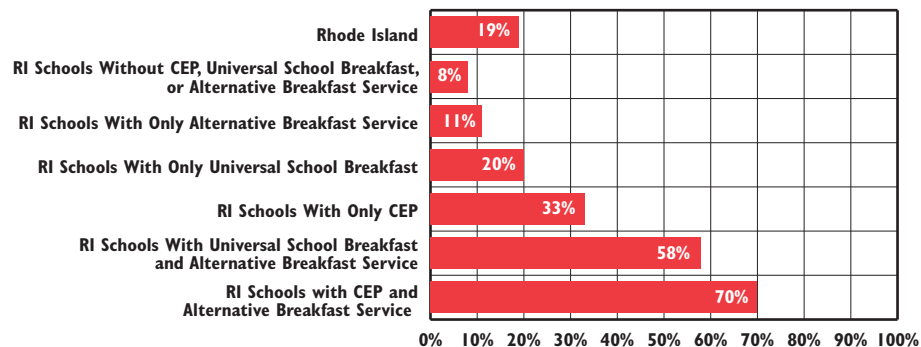
Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts every morning, and children in these families are at risk of falling behind their peers physically, cognitively, academically, emotionally, and socially. Children who are

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 2017-2018 school year in Rhode Island, 53 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 33rd in the U.S. for participation in the School Breakfast Program, down from 31st last year. If Rhode Island increased low-income student participation in the School Breakfast Program to 70% of School Lunch Program participation, the state would receive \$2.6 million in additional federal funds to support the School Breakfast Program.<sup>9</sup>

## Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2018.

- ◆ **The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools and districts with 40% or more students identified as low-income (e.g., enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or at-risk (i.e., homeless or in foster care) to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students and offers higher reimbursements.<sup>10</sup> During the 2016-2017 school year, 20,721 schools (55% of all eligible schools nationally) participated in CEP. Rhode Island's participation rate was among the lowest with 19% of eligible schools participating.<sup>11</sup>**
- ◆ **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 the administrative burden for schools.<sup>12,13</sup> During the 2018-2019 school year, all schools in Cranston and Woonsocket, selected schools in five other districts, and three charter schools offered universal school breakfast.<sup>14</sup>**
- ◆ **Making breakfast part of the school day is another proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation, reducing stigma, and increasing convenience. In fact, some states are adopting legislation requiring schools to offer alternative breakfast service.<sup>15,16</sup> During the 2018-2019 school year, several Rhode Island school districts offered alternative breakfast service, including breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go" breakfasts, bagged breakfasts, or breakfast on a cart in all or some of their schools.<sup>17</sup>**

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Table 14.

**Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2018**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2018 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	3,357	44	1%	157	13	8%
Bristol Warren	3,383	354	10%	1,161	214	18%
Burrillville	2,368	156	7%	814	116	14%
Central Falls	2,774	1,318	48%	NA	NA	NA
Charlho	3,364	176	5%	704	116	16%
Coventry	9,462	390	4%	2,970	286	10%
Cranston	11,224	2,469	22%	4,590	1,420	31%
Cumberland	4,837	428	9%	1,029	250	24%
East Greenwich	2,544	69	3%	170	34	20%
East Providence	5,890	1,055	18%	2,975	734	25%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,628	87	5%	285	49	17%
Foster	270	31	11%	64	26	40%
Foster-Glocester	1,344	98	7%	244	51	21%
Glocester	556	64	11%	74	27	37%
Jamestown	486	14	3%	44	*	17%
Johnston	3,409	370	11%	1,458	272	19%
Lincoln	3,214	224	7%	853	159	19%
Little Compton	253	*	1%	41	*	3%
Middletown	2,487	128	5%	732	99	13%
Narragansett	1,332	75	6%	284	42	15%
New Shoreham	136	11	8%	23	*	31%
Newport	2,338	516	22%	1,442	436	30%
North Kingstown	4,264	273	6%	1,031	218	21%
North Providence	4,027	624	15%	1,569	392	25%
North Smithfield	1,730	62	4%	320	40	12%
Pawtucket	10,325	2,470	24%	NA	NA	NA
Portsmouth	2,500	93	4%	398	55	14%
Providence	27,141	11,065	41%	NA	NA	NA
Scituate	1,245	29	2%	221	19	8%
Smithfield	2,699	130	5%	414	73	18%
South Kingstown	3,050	209	7%	568	154	27%
Tiverton	3,550	112	3%	864	74	9%
Warwick	9,334	657	7%	3,187	456	14%
West Warwick	3,993	579	15%	2,120	465	22%
Westerly	2,740	278	10%	970	234	24%
Woonsocket	6,734	2,257	34%	4,674	1,859	40%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>8,892</i>	<i>3,006</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,842</i>	<i>507</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>18%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>46,974</i>	<i>17,110</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>103,014</i>	<i>9,808</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>31,776</i>	<i>6,541</i>	<i>21%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>160,859</i>	<i>30,454</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

Rhode Island Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2018.

NA indicates that data on low-income students and their participation in school breakfast was not available because some or all schools in this district were using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and therefore not collecting data on the incomes of students' families. During the 2018-2019 school year, Central Falls, all elementary schools in Providence, some schools in Pawtucket, Highlander Charter School, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, and the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center were using CEP.

\*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 state, and state totals.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, Charette Charter School, 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 School for the Deaf, and Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

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

The October 2018 enrollment and number of low-income students are for the full month of October and are not comparable with the October 1, 2018 enrollment numbers reported elsewhere in the Factbook.

*(Sources and References are continued on page 177)*