



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**TOM TORLAKSON**

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

October 3, 2013

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and School Food Service Directors:

### **IMPROVING STUDENT NUTRITION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS**

I am proud to be the honorary chair of the BreakfastFirst Campaign because promoting the School Breakfast Program (SBP) is integral to my Team California for Healthy Kids (TCHK) campaign, which focuses on making **healthy choices** the **easy choices**.

In alignment with the TCHK goal to promote good eating habits, BreakfastFirst aims to ensure that all students are served an optimally nutritious breakfast using innovative models such as Classroom Breakfast, Grab-and-Go, and Second Chance Breakfast. These models of service are known to dramatically increase participation, which brings the benefits of school breakfast to the maximum number of students.

This year marks significant changes in the SBP as part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has revised the SBP nutrition standards to include more whole grain-rich foods, an increase in fruit servings, and a weekly calorie range requirement. In addition, a weekly sodium maximum will become effective in school year 2014–15. The goal of the HHFKA is to improve child nutrition by offering healthier, more nutritious meals to students as part of the SBP.

**Please Note:** As of school year 2013–14, the SBP is now part of the new administrative review process for school nutrition programs.

Research confirms the clear connection between health, learning, and attendance. Healthy children are more successful in school, miss fewer days of school, are more attentive and well-behaved, and are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college. Healthy students not only excel academically, but are more likely to be positively engaged in social, community, and extra-curricular activities. The USDA reports that 14.5 percent, or nearly 17.6 million of American households, were uncertain of having or acquiring enough food to feed their families in 2012. This food insecurity is worse in California, where the USDA reports that 15.6 percent of households do not have enough money or resources for food. The good news is that this percentage is down from 16.2 percent in 2011.

It is so important that we strive to feed healthy breakfasts to children at school. The implementation of inventive models like Classroom Breakfast links nutrition to our joint

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goal of increasing academic achievement in schools. In most cases, serving breakfast can be completely supported by federal and California State meal reimbursement. In addition, as former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell and State Controller John Chiang shared in a joint letter in July 2010, "As long as the breakfast is served and eaten in the classroom while otherwise allowable instructional activities are underway, the time will not be considered free time by auditors . . . The SBP is an easy way to enhance children's health and improve their academic achievement."

The full letter is located on the California Department of Education (CDE) Breakfast in the Classroom Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/yr10jtltr0701.asp>.

I urge you to expand your SBP (especially outside of the cafeteria) to serve the nutritional needs of your students and to strengthen their academic performance. The CDE annually offers up to \$15,000 per school in School Breakfast Grants. These grants assist schools in their efforts to start a breakfast program and/or increase participation. The CDE has awarded over \$3 million through 242 SBP Grants in the past three years. For more information about these grants, please contact James Rickner, School Nutrition Programs Analyst, Nutrition Services Division, by phone at 916-445-7360 or by e-mail at [jrickner@cde.ca.gov](mailto:jrickner@cde.ca.gov).

If you would like information on innovative breakfast models, visit the California Food Policy Advocates BreakfastFirst Campaign Web site at <http://www.BreakfastFirst.org>. You may also contact your Field Services Unit Child Nutrition Consultant to discuss the SBP by phone at 916-323-4558 or 800-952-5609.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

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