



The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is lead partner for the No Kid Hungry campaign in Arkansas.

# MEDIA RELEASE

Media release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate use. Contact Nancy Conley, Arkansas Hunger Alliance communications director, for more information [nconley@arhungeralliance.org](mailto:nconley@arhungeralliance.org).

## School Breakfast Month

*Breakfast After the Bell and the Community Eligibility Provision are helping schools feed more students and bolstering child nutrition department budgets.*

LITTLE ROCK, AR (MARCH 6, 2018) – Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson has proclaimed March as School Breakfast Month in Arkansas. School breakfast advocates from Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas No Kid Hungry Campaign, legislators and others gathered in the Capitol Rotunda on Tuesday to recognize the importance of school breakfast in assuring all students start the day focused and ready to learn.

Arkansas Department of Education Deputy Commissioner Ivy Pfeffer presented the Governor’s proclamation and reminded those present that 64 percent (or fully 2/3) of Arkansas students are from low-income families. “They come to school with needs, one of which is hunger,” said Pfeffer. She reiterated the department’s commitment to making sure those students— like all others— get a quality education.

Patty Barker, Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign director, reported that according to the AR Department of Education figures, Arkansas has increased the number of meals served to children at breakfast by almost 4 million meals since 2011 and has increased by 10 percent the ratio of low-income children who eat school breakfast relative to those who eat school lunch. The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign is aiming to meet the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) benchmark goal of 70 percent participation for school breakfast. Reaching that 70 percent goal would mean an additional 169,425 students eating school breakfast each day and an additional \$4.14 million in federal reimbursements going into Arkansas’s school coffers.\*

Superintendent Doug Graham of the Nashville School District reported that they are feeding **all** students breakfast at school and are already seeing the benefits to student performance and their nutrition budget even though it is their first year to offer breakfast to all.

Micheal Stone, Executive Director Student & Equity Services for the North Little Rock School District, described their successful early participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Breakfast After the Bell saying, “Our increase for breakfasts is 492 each day. Putting this into perspective, we are PLUS 50,751 breakfasts and 44,612 lunches. Our reimbursement fund each day is PLUS \$5,692.” Mr. Stone encouraged all educators saying,

\* <http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-breakfast-scorecard-sy-2016-2017.pdf>



The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is lead partner for the No Kid Hungry campaign in Arkansas.

“If you are a district and you are on the fence about adopting CEP or a program like Breakfast After the Bell that will help you feed more students, I would suggest you go for it.”

Daniel Connerly, Russellville School District Child Nutrition director, explained how volume pricing and involving students in the choice made their financial commitment to feeding more students a win/win for students and the school district. He added, “As a district, we realized the choice the children often had to make in the morning was to eat breakfast or play. We decided to let them do both. Now we see them playing with their friends before school and then heading in afterwards to fuel up on breakfast while learning at their desks. This has doubled our students who now eat breakfast each day.”

Courtney Cochran, Arkansas Teacher of the Year 2017 shared an experience of a student, Brenda, who was so hungry she couldn’t learn. Said Cochran, “There **is** no method or strategy that can reach a child who does not have the nutrition to make her brain and body function properly. Not even the greatest teacher in the world can overcome that barrier.”

### School Breakfast in Arkansas | Quick Facts

- **One in four** Arkansas children don’t always know where they will get their next meal.
- Hunger causes headaches, stomach aches, inability to concentrate, irritability and acting out behaviors. None of which are conducive to learning.
- Schools, through the US Department of Agriculture’s National School Lunch and National School Breakfast programs, are working to make sure our children—especially those from low-income families— have the nutrition they need to succeed at school.
- In the 2016/17 school year, there were **287,142** students in Arkansas schools who were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Two strategies have proven to be the most effective means of insuring that students get a nutritious breakfast Monday through Friday:
  - **Breakfast After the Bell** programs (Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab & Go and Second Chance Breakfast) make breakfast part of the school day, eliminating many of the barriers to school breakfast participation like transportation issues and stigma.
  - **Community Eligibility Provision**, a USDA option which allows schools in high poverty areas to feed all of their students (regardless of ability to pay) at no cost to families.
- The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign works with schools across the state to start Breakfast After the Bell programs by offering technical assistance and grant dollars.

**Media release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate use. Contact Nancy Conley, Arkansas Hunger Alliance communications director, for more information [nconley@arhungeralliance.org](mailto:nconley@arhungeralliance.org).**