

# Breakfast for Success! Dallas ISD Expands Breakfast-in-the-Classroom Districtwide

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When the **Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom** pilot program began in school year 2010-11, Dallas Independent School District (Dallas, TX) was one of the original districts to sign on and begin serving children breakfast-in-the-classroom. In August 2011 we sat down with **Dallas ISD Executive Food Service Director of Child and Nutrition Services Dora Rivas** (M.S., R.D., L.D.) about the success of their BIC program, and the fast program expansion that success made possible.

Since that interview, Dallas ISD has had even more amazing breakfast-in-the-classroom news. In 2012 the Dallas School Board gave the green light to make breakfast-in-the-classroom mandatory for all schools in the Dallas Independent School District.

We recently sat down with Jennifer DeHoog, Nutrition Specialist at Dallas ISD Food & Child Nutrition Services to talk about some tips for making breakfast-in-the-classroom a success.

## **Beyond Breakfast: Thanks for taking the time to meet with us today, Jennifer. Let's start with a little background about Dallas and breakfast-in-the-classroom.**

Jennifer DeHoog: We started out with the Walmart grant through Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom in about fifteen schools, which then grew to sixty. Now the board has voted to make breakfast-in-the-classroom mandatory district-wide, starting with our elementary schools. All of our elementary schools will have breakfast-in-the-classroom next year, which is really exciting to see.

## **BB: The one question everyone has about implementing or growing a BIC program is about funding—how does a school find the money to get started, or to expand?**

JD: There are many groups that have grants available, and that has helped us in starting and building the program. For example, **Action for Healthy Kids** and **Dairy Max**—we've applied through their grant programs, and there are many others that can help you get started. If you don't have money, don't let that stop you—there is money out there for schools!

National School Breakfast Week is a great time to showcase your BIC program and help it grow—we take advantage of that. Utilizing the SNA and School Nutrition Foundation websites, looking for resources and training tools, and talking points on BIC is very important—you can get great resources to incorporate into your presentations and educational tools. I also use **National Dairy Council**—they have great talking points and FAQs. We've partnered twice with Dairy Council to host events around NSBW which helps out a lot. Smaller districts that are always looking for help with funding should know that by partnering with organizations they can find the money that is out there to build and grow their programs.

## **BB: Can you tell us about how you utilize National School Breakfast Week to help you promote your program?**

JD: What we did with our BIC schools to recognize them in their efforts was a promotion of BIC schools prior to National School Breakfast Week. In one promotion we partnered with our local Dairy Councils, and they provided an NFL player visit for National School Breakfast Week.

Last year we partnered with Dairy Council to highlight how we come together to support National School Breakfast Week: USDA was here, Action for Healthy Kids was here, too—they provide funding through grants—and the Texas Hunger Initiative. Partnerships and coalition building are a huge part of the program. I think after NSBW I think we'll do another media event with the superintendent, to announce the expansion of the program. It's important to highlight the community supporters, to talk about how your program is doing, and how it is making a difference.

National School Breakfast Week is a prime time to promote your program. A national observance gets people more interested, particularly the media. The media is a great way to get the word out about the positive things you are doing in your program to benefit children, and also the importance of the School Breakfast Program. We know with BIC you see a difference when students start their day with a meal, and all the research shows that it helps kids do better in the classroom, it helps them [overall] nutritionally as well. Breakfast Week is a great time to get your message across about what your program is doing, and we always take advantage of that. We celebrate every year, and tie in whatever the national theme is—our theme mimics the national one.

**BB: Can you tell us a little about the kinds of resources you have used, and are currently using, and the difference they make for a BIC program?**

JD: I use SNA/SNF resources all the time to help with our nutrition education resources—these are wonderful resources, and we appreciate all that SNA does so thank you! Here in Dallas we really laid the groundwork for a successful, sustainable program. You have to do pre-planning and do some work before you can say, “Okay, we’re doing this program.” We have checklists, training, a video on our website that is really detailed; it’s a process, and I’ve been so proud to see how the program was really built to sustainable.

School nutrition staff will make or break the success of your BIC program. We did training with our staff to walk them through BIC, to see how it’s implemented, and we provided them with talking points to help them talk about the program. We answered their questions and concerns, and we found that BIC was more positively received after that.

When you are talking about a new program, you are going to have staff asking, “What does this mean to me, and how am I going to do this?” so you have to make sure that they are comfortable with the program. Training supervisors, having their peers who already have the program come in and speak, providing them with checklists and/or additional early support during the beginning of the program, and a walk-through before the program starts are all ways to address early concerns. And then of course checking in after the program starts to see how things are going, that’s important.

**BB: Jennifer, do you have any final thoughts for our readers on breakfast-in-the-classroom?**

JD: It’s one thing to know what the research shows about breakfast-in-the-classroom, but it’s another thing completely when you see first-hand and hear the testimonials of people who say how much they have benefitted from the program. It truly makes the kids more attentive; mornings go more smoothly for the teachers and the students because the kids are full and well-nourished and willing to learn. Our motto is “Reaching Every Student, Every Day”.