

# Missouri School Breakfast Report

2016–2017 School Year



## Acknowledgments

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Empower Missouri is dedicated to ensuring social justice for all Missourians. A strictly non-partisan organization, we educate and empower Missourians on issues of hunger, housing, education, health and economic opportunity.

Founded in 1981, Operation Food Search (OFS) is a hunger relief organization that provides food, nutrition education, and food access advocacy. With a strategic focus aimed at ending childhood hunger, OFS empowers families with a range of programs and services proven to reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy and affordable food. OFS engages in cross-sector collaborations, and works closely with community stakeholders and elected officials, to build public and political will to end hunger.

This report analyzes the School Breakfast Program's reach in Missouri school districts that participated in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program in the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, this report covers the School Breakfast Program's benefits, how it works, and best practices to increase school breakfast participation.

Empower Missouri and Operation Food Search gratefully acknowledge major support of its work to expand and improve the School Breakfast Program from the following:

- Food Research & Action Center;
- Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom; and
- Walmart Foundation.

Empower Missouri and Operation Food Search also acknowledge the indispensable roles played by statewide partners:

- Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals;
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Missouri NEA;
- Missouri SNA; and
- No Kid Hungry Missouri.



## Introduction

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Participation in the School Breakfast Program continued to grow in Missouri in the 2016–2017 school year, providing a healthy morning meal to more than 247,000 children each school day.

This is good news for Missouri schools and families. The School Breakfast Program is an important tool for educators to ensure that students have adequate nutrition to learn and thrive and not be distracted by hunger or lack of proper nutrition in the classroom. The school nutrition programs are a vital component of the federal safety net for low-income families, helping stretch limited budgets and provide assurance for parents that their children can receive healthy meals at school each day.

High breakfast participation can be attributed to two key strategies: adopting community eligibility (when possible) and implementing breakfast after the bell service models, such as breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go,” and second chance, all of which reach more children than the traditional method of serving breakfast in the cafeteria before the school day starts.

While gains are being made, and more schools are adopting best practices, there is still

significant variation among the school districts that provide breakfast to their low-income students. In the 2016–2017 school year, 59.4 low-income students ate school breakfast for every 100 that ate school lunch in Missouri. In order to meet the national benchmark set by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) of reaching a ratio of 70 low-income children receiving school breakfast for every 100 receiving school lunch, low-performing school districts must take every opportunity to increase school breakfast participation, to ensure Missouri students do not miss out on the academic, nutrition, and health benefits of the program.

This report examines key findings regarding school breakfast participation rates in Missouri school districts that participated in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program during the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, this report informs about the School Breakfast Program’s benefits and how it works; offering breakfast at no charge to all students, potentially through community eligibility; breakfast after the bell models; examples of top-performing school districts, and school breakfast funding information. A list of the top-performing school districts is on pages 10 and 11. Separate from this report is a breakdown of [school breakfast participation by school district](#).

# How the School Breakfast Program Works

## Who Operates the School Breakfast Program?

Any public school, nonprofit private school, or residential child care institution can participate in the national School Breakfast Program and receive federal funds for each breakfast served. The program is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and in Missouri through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## Who can Participate in the School Breakfast Program?

Any student attending a school that offers the program can eat breakfast. What the federal government covers, and what a student pays, depends on family income:

- Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible for free school meals.
- Children from families with incomes between 130 to 185 percent of the FPL qualify for reduced-price meals and can be charged no more than 30 cents per breakfast.
- Children from families with incomes above 185 percent of the FPL pay charges (referred to as “paid meals”), which are set by the school.

Other federal and, in some cases, state rules, however, make it possible to offer free meals to all children, or to all children in households with incomes under 185 percent of the FPL,

especially in schools with high proportions of low-income children.

## How are Children Certified for Free or Reduced-Price Meals?

Most children are certified for free or reduced-price meals via applications collected by the school district at the beginning of the school year or during the year. However, children in households participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), as well as foster youth, migrant, homeless, or runaway youth, and Head Start participants are “categorically eligible” (automatically eligible) for free school meals and can be certified without submitting a school meal application.

School districts are required to “directly certify” children in households participating in SNAP for free school meals through data matching of SNAP records with school enrollment lists. School districts also have the option of directly certifying other categorically eligible children as well. Some states also utilize income information from Medicaid to directly certify students as eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.

Schools also should use data from the state to certify categorically eligible students and they can coordinate with other personnel, such as the school district’s homeless and migrant education liaisons, to obtain documentation

to certify children for free school meals. Some categorically eligible children may be missed in this process, requiring the household to submit a school meals application. However, these households are not required to complete the income information section of the application.

### How are School Districts Reimbursed?

The federal reimbursement rate the school receives for each meal served depends on whether a student is receiving free, reduced-price, or paid meals.

For the 2016–2017 school year, schools received

- \$1.71 per free breakfast;
- \$1.41 per reduced-price breakfast; and
- \$0.29 per “paid” breakfast.

“Severe need” schools received an additional 33 cents for each free or reduced-price breakfast served. Schools are considered severe need if at least 40 percent of the lunches served during the second preceding school year were free or reduced-price.

## Offering Breakfast Free to All

Many high-poverty schools are able to offer free meals for all students, with federal reimbursements based on the proportions of low-income children in the school. Providing breakfast at no charge to all students helps remove the stigma often associated with means-tested school breakfast (the idea that breakfast in school is for “the poor kids”), opens the program to children from families that would struggle to pay the reduced-price copayment or the paid breakfast charges, and streamlines the implementation of breakfast in the classroom and other alternative service models. Schools can offer free breakfast to all students through the following options:

- **Community Eligibility Provision:** Community eligibility schools are high-poverty schools that offer free breakfast

and lunch to all students and do not have to collect, process, or verify school meal applications, or keep track of meals by fee category, resulting in significant administrative savings and increased participation.

- **Provision 2:** Schools using Provision 2 (referring to a provision of the National School Lunch Act) do not need to collect, process, or verify school meal applications or keep track of meals by fee category for at least three out of every four years. Schools collect school meal applications and count and claim meals by fee category during year one of the multi-year cycle, called the “base year.” Those data then determine the federal reimbursement and are used for future years in the cycle. Provision 2 schools have

the option to serve only breakfast or lunch, or both breakfast and lunch, to all students at no charge, and use economies of scale from increased participation and significant administrative savings to offset the cost of offering free meals to all students.

- **Nonpricing:** No fees are collected from students, while schools continue to receive federal reimbursements for the breakfasts served under the three-tier federal fee categories (free, reduced-price, and paid).

## Benefits of School Breakfast

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Children from low-income households are more likely to experience food insecurity. Research shows that access to school meals can improve students' dietary intake and give them the nutrition they need to start their school day focused and ready to learn. In short, school meals, such as school breakfast, are critical to the healthy development and academic achievement of students.

The academic and health benefits of school breakfast are undeniable. Participation in the School Breakfast Program has been linked with better test performance; fewer cases of tardiness, absenteeism, and disciplinary problems; fewer visits to the school nurse; improved overall dietary quality; and a lower probability of

overweight and obesity. Low-income students in particular benefit from participating in school meal programs. (For more information on the benefits of school breakfast, see the following briefs from FRAC: [Breakfast for Learning](#); [Breakfast for Health](#); and [The Connections Between Food Insecurity, the Federal Nutrition Programs, and Student Behavior](#).)

In light of the large and growing body of research supporting the link between school breakfast and academic success, education stakeholders, including the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals and Missouri NEA, are making concerted efforts to improve the reach of the School Breakfast Program.

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*“We put students first and focus on their holistic needs. It is not enough to just know that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It has become an essential act of kindness, health and wellness, and student achievement to provide a second chance for a good breakfast at school. That is why Breakfast after the Bell is so important for all children.*

— Dr. Art J. McCoy, Superintendent of Schools, Jennings School District

## Breakfast After the Bell

Implementing a breakfast after the bell model that moves breakfast out of the school cafeteria served before school starts — making it more accessible and a part of the regular school day — has proven to be the most successful strategy for increasing school breakfast participation. Breakfast after the bell overcomes timing, convenience, and stigma barriers that get in the way of children participating in school breakfast and are even more impactful when they are combined with offering breakfast at no charge to all students. Schools generally use one or more of three options when offering breakfast after the bell:

- **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Meals are delivered to and eaten in the classroom at the start of the school day.
- **“Grab and Go”:** Children (particularly older students) can quickly grab the components of their breakfast from carts or kiosks in the hallway or the cafeteria line to eat in their classroom or in common areas.
- **Second Chance Breakfast:** Students are offered a second chance to eat breakfast after homeroom or first period. Many middle and high school students are not hungry first thing in the morning. Serving these students breakfast after first period allows them ample time to arrive to class on time, while still providing them the opportunity to get a nutritious start to the day.

### Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (Partners for BIC) — a consortium of national organizations that came together for their shared passion for nutrition and educational achievements — including the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), the NEA Foundation, the School Nutrition Foundation, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation — is now working in Missouri to increase breakfast participation.

Empower Missouri, Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, Missouri NEA, Missouri SNA, and Operation Food Search have joined the Partners to engage and educate stakeholders across the state about best practices to increase breakfast participation and work together to implement these practices statewide. To help districts, the Partners for BIC provide grants and technical assistance to help school districts implement successful and sustainable programs. As of February 2018, three Missouri school districts — Jennings School District, Hayti School District and St. Louis City School District — have been awarded the grant and are in the process of implementing breakfast after the bell models in multiple schools. For more information on the grant, go to: [www.breakfastintheclassroom.org/grants](http://www.breakfastintheclassroom.org/grants).

## Community Eligibility

In the 2016–2017 school year, and in its third year of nationwide availability, 374 high-poverty schools in Missouri adopted community eligibility, an increase of 35 schools compared to the prior school year. The momentum has not stopped; even more schools in Missouri have signed up for the program in the 2017–2018 school year. School districts adopting community eligibility experience a multitude of benefits. Community eligibility eliminates the need for school meal applications, relieving school districts from the administrative and financial burdens of processing and verifying school meal applications. By allowing all students, regardless of income, to eat a

free school breakfast and lunch, the stigma associated with means testing these programs disappears and participation grows. With the administrative burden of processing school meal applications lifted, schools can redirect resources to improved nutrition, menu planning, and food procurement, resulting in better school meals. School districts can use a number of strategies to maximize the reach of community eligibility and ensure that all students are able to eat a healthy breakfast and start their school day ready to learn. For more information about this option and how to implement best practices, visit [FRAC's website](#).

### Missouri school districts that have adopted community eligibility (2017–2018 school year):

Adair Co. R-I (1 school)	Hancock Place (3 schools)	Potosi R-III (5 schools)
Bismarck R-V (2 schools)	Hayti R-II (4 schools)	Rich Hill R-IV (1 school)
Boonville R-I (3 schools)	Hickman Mills C-1 (13 schools)	Richland R-IV (1 school)
Cabool R-IV (2 schools)	Holcomb R-III (1 school)	Richwoods R-VII (1 school)
Calhoun R-VIII (2 schools)	Humansville R-IV (3 schools)	Ritenour (1 school)
Caruthersville 18 (3 schools)	Jefferson City (4 schools)	Riverview Gardens (13 schools)
Center 58 (4 schools)	Jennings (7 schools)	Salem R-80 (3 schools)
Centerville R-I (1 school)	Kansas City 33 (36 schools)	Scott Co. Central (2 schools)
Chaffee R-II (1 school)	Kingston K-14 (4 schools)	Sedalia 200 (7 schools)
Charleston R-I (3 schools)	Kirbyville R-VI (1 school)	Senath-Hornersville C-8 (3 schools)
Clarkton C-4 (3 schools)	Laclede Co. C-5 (1 school)	Sheldon R-VIII (2 schools)
Columbia 93 (8 schools)	Leesville R-IX (1 school)	Shell Knob 78 (1 school)
Couch R-I (1 school)	Lutie R-VI (2 schools)	Slater (1 school)
Crocker R-II (1 school)	Macks Creek R-V (2 schools)	South Pemiscot Co. R-V (2 schools)
Delta R-V (1 school)	Malden R-I (2 schools)	Southland C-9 (2 schools)
El Dorado Springs R-II (3 schools)	Malta Bend R-V (2 schools)	Special School District St. Louis Co. (4 schools)
Eminence R-I (2 schools)	Marquand-Zion R-VI (2 schools)	Spickard R-II (1 school)
Everton R-III (2 schools)	Mexico 59 (3 schools)	St. Joseph (14 schools)
Fair Play R-II (3 schools)	Miami R-I (1 school)	St. Louis City (73 schools)
Ferguson-Florissant R-II (25 schools)	Morgan Co. R-I (2 schools)	Success R-VI (1 school)
Galena R-II (1 school)	Normandy (8 schools)	University City (7 schools)
Gideon 37 (2 schools)	North Pemiscot Co. R-I (2 schools)	Warsaw R-IX (5 schools)
Gordon Parks Elem. (1 school)	Pettis Co. R-XII (1 school)	



## Conclusion

By utilizing best practice strategies, school districts are reducing childhood hunger in Missouri. Through the implementation of breakfast after the bell models and community eligibility, along with an engaged group of diverse stakeholders, Missouri has made great

strides over the past few years to expand school breakfast. Empower Missouri and Operation Food Search look forward to working with school districts and partners to build on these successes in the coming years.



**Top District Performers: Ratio of Free and Reduced-Price School Breakfast to Lunch Participation, School Year 2016–2017**

KENNETT 39	118.7	1
AURORA R-VIII	114.1	2
PUTNAM CO. R-I	106.5	3
LEESVILLE R-IX	104.0	4
WEAUBLEAU R-III	102.1	5
BISMARCK R-V	101.2	6
COWGILL R-VI	100.1	7
ALTENBURG 48	99.7	8
HERMITAGE R-IV	97.8	9
BELLEVIEW R-III	97.5	10
MIDDLE GROVE C-1	97.0	11
ROSCOE C-1	96.7	12
MANES R-V	95.1	13
MARK TWAIN R-VIII	94.9	14
RICHLAND R-I	94.9	15
HARDEMAN R-X	94.8	16
OREARVILLE R-IV	94.2	17
SKYLINE R-II	93.9	18
NEW YORK R-IV	92.8	19
LEXINGTON R-V	90.5	20
HOLLIDAY C-2	90.4	21
MIAMI R-I	88.2	22
CENTERVILLE R-I	88.1	23
GREENVILLE R-II	86.1	24
SPECIAL SCHOOL DST. ST. LOUIS CO.	86.1	25
OSAGE CO. R-I	86.1	26
LIVINGSTON CO. R-III	85.9	27
EAST PRAIRIE R-II	85.9	28
KIRBYVILLE R-VI	85.7	29
WARSAW R-IX	85.0	30

DAVIS R-XII	84.9	31
SPICKARD R-II	84.8	32
BOSWORTH R-V	84.8	33
LAQUEY R-V	84.7	34
WEST PLAINS R-VII	84.7	35
LONEDELL R-XIV	83.7	36
TANEYVILLE R-II	82.9	37
LAREDO R-VII	82.3	38
NEOSHO SCHOOL DISTRICT	82.1	39
SUCCESS R-VI	82.0	40
THORNFIELD R-I	81.8	41
PHELPS CO. R-III	81.5	42
CRAIG R-III	81.4	43
BRADLEYVILLE R-I	81.0	44
CARUTHERSVILLE 18	80.9	45
PLAINVIEW R-VIII	80.9	46
STRAFFORD R-VI	80.9	47
HIGH POINT R-III	80.8	48
RICHARDS R-V	80.7	49
CHADWICK R-I	80.6	50
BONCL R-X	80.6	51
CLEVER R-V	80.4	52
CAMPBELL R-II	80.3	53
PLATO R-V	80.3	54
DADEVILLE R-II	79.9	55
RICHWOODS R-VII	79.6	56
MACKS CREEK R-V	79.5	57
GALENA R-II	79.4	58
COUCH R-I	79.1	59
DORA R-III	78.7	60

continued

## Top District Performers (continued)

MARQUAND-ZION R-VI	78.6	61
HALE R-I	78.4	62
FARMINGTON R-VII	78.1	63
CLARKSBURG C-2	77.8	64
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	77.6	65
PATTONSBURG R-II	77.5	66
DUNKLIN R-V	77.5	67
SWEDEBORG R-III	77.0	68
MONITEAU CO. R-V	77.0	69
OAK HILL R-I	76.9	70
RICHLAND R-IV	76.9	71
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	76.6	72
EMINENCE R-I	76.4	73
HICKMAN MILLS C-1	76.4	74
SUNRISE R-IX	76.2	75
MALTA BEND R-V	76.1	76
GASCONADE C-4	76.0	77
RIPLEY CO. R-IV	76.0	78
FAIR PLAY R-II	75.9	79
CLIMAX SPRINGS R-IV	75.5	80
GLENWOOD R-VIII	75.2	81
PEMISCOT CO. R-III	75.0	82
KINGSTON 42	74.9	83
TRI-COUNTY R-VII	74.7	84
GILLIAM C-4	74.5	85
NORWOOD R-I	74.5	86

RIVERVIEW GARDENS	74.3	87
RENICK R-V	73.9	88
BLACKWATER R-II	73.9	89
COOPER CO. R-IV	73.6	90
CHILHOWEE R-IV	73.6	91
STRASBURG C-3	73.6	92
MAPLEWOOD-RICHMOND HEIGHTS	73.2	93
HAYTI R-II	72.8	94
SPARTA R-III	72.7	95
CABOOL R-IV	72.7	96
OSCEOLA	72.7	97
HURLEY R-I	72.7	98
HARTVILLE R-II	72.1	99
JUNCTION HILL C-12	72.0	100
VERONA R-VII	71.5	101
STOUTLAND R-II	71.2	102
ADVANCE R-IV	71.2	103
RAYTOWN C-2	71.2	104
BLUE EYE R-V	70.9	105
SHAWNEE R-III	70.7	106
KINGSTON K-14	70.6	107
BRUNSWICK R-II	70.6	108
STRAIN-JAPAN R-XVI	70.5	109
LUTIE R-VI	70.5	110
WHEATLAND R-II	70.1	111