

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**District School Breakfast Program Served 16,022 Low-Income
Children in 2005, an increase of 2.9 Percent**

**FRAC Estimates the District Could Serve At Least
5,274 More Low-Income Students and
Leverage \$1,077,691 Million in Additional Federal Funds**

WASHINGTON, DC – Participation in the District of Columbia’s School Breakfast Program rose by 448 low-income students in the 2004-2005 school year to 16,022 students, compared to the 2003-2004 school year, according to the annual School Breakfast Scorecard released today by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

“We’re pleased to see the city do better in serving school breakfast to students, but there is still much to do,” said Kimberly Perry, Director, D.C. Hunger Solutions. “A nutritious school breakfast is a hunger-fighting tool, an anti-obesity tool, and an academic tool; and D.C. Hunger Solutions is working to get schools committed to going the extra mile to assure every student is served.”

The program in the District still reaches only 2 in 5 eligible children -- 41 low-income children for every 100 who eat school lunch.

Perry said, “Many states are serving more than 50 students in the school breakfast program for every 100 they serve in school lunch. We believe the District can reach and exceed those numbers. If it was doing as well as the best-performing states, the District would leverage an additional \$1,077,691 million dollars in federal funding.”

FRAC identified thirteen states (Oregon, West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, New Mexico, Vermont, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina) that had the best results in 2004-2005 in reaching low-income youngsters with school breakfasts – each with more than 50 students in free or reduced price breakfasts for every 100 in free or reduced price lunches.

Over the past two years D.C. Hunger Solutions, a non-profit anti-hunger advocacy project of the Food Research and Action Center, partnered with D.C. Public Schools to conduct special outreach activities in several schools to stress to students the importance of eating a healthy school breakfast. In addition, the State Education Office has provided technical assistance to charter schools to develop school breakfast programs to serve their students each morning.

D.C. Hunger Solutions is urging schools to take the next step to increase participation – to aggressively implement the new District policy of offering school breakfast free to all students. This is a policy many school districts have implemented across the country with great success. In October 2005 D.C. Public Schools began the policy. Significant increases in student participation have been reported in just two months.

Nationally, a record 7.5 million children received free or reduced price breakfast each day, in the 2004-2005 school year, a 5.3 percent increase in the number of low-income students eating breakfast at school compared to the prior year. Since 1990, the number of low-income students receiving free or reduced price breakfasts has more than doubled.

The total number of children participating, including more affluent children who paid for their own breakfasts, was also a record number -- 9.2 million.

Making sure schools participate, conducting outreach, and connecting breakfast to local wellness policies are among strategies that can help increase breakfast participation, according to Perry.

Local school wellness policies are being developed in school districts across the nation in response to a new law requiring their implementation in the 2006-2007 school year. “The purpose of local wellness policies is to improve children’s nutrition and prevent childhood obesity,” said Lynn Parker, FRAC’s Director of Child Nutrition Programs and Nutrition Policy. “Because the School Breakfast Program contributes to the achievement of these nutrition and health goals, making school breakfasts available to all students and promoting their participation in the program are vital ingredients for all local wellness policies.” According to FRAC, at least 15 states already are planning or undertaking activities to promote school breakfast expansion as part of school wellness policy implementation.

School Breakfast Program funding is available on an entitlement basis to eligible public and private non-profit schools and residential child care institutions. The federal government reimburses schools for all or part of the cost of every meal, depending on the incomes of participating children's families.

See **2005 School Breakfast Scorecard** at http://www.frac.org/pdf/2005_SBP.pdf (PDF file).

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D.C. Hunger Solutions, a project of the Food Research and Action Center, is dedicated to fighting hunger and obesity by improving the nutrition, health and well-being of children and families in the District of Columbia.

The Food Research and Action Center (<http://www.frac.org>) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition.