

Children Participating in School Breakfast

DEFINITION

Children participating in school breakfast is the percentage of low-income children who participate in the School Breakfast Program. Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for and enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program.

SIGNIFICANCE

The School Breakfast Program helps ensure that the nation's most vulnerable children start their day off with a healthy meal. During the 2015-2016 school year, 12.1 million low-income children in the U.S. participating in the School Breakfast Program ate breakfast at school each day, continuing a pattern of steady year-over-year growth in student participation over the past decade.¹ The School Breakfast Program offers nutritious meals, which together with school lunches, make up a large proportion of the daily dietary intake of participating children.² The School Breakfast Program helps schools support academic success and improved attendance, behavior and health, including reduced obesity rates.³

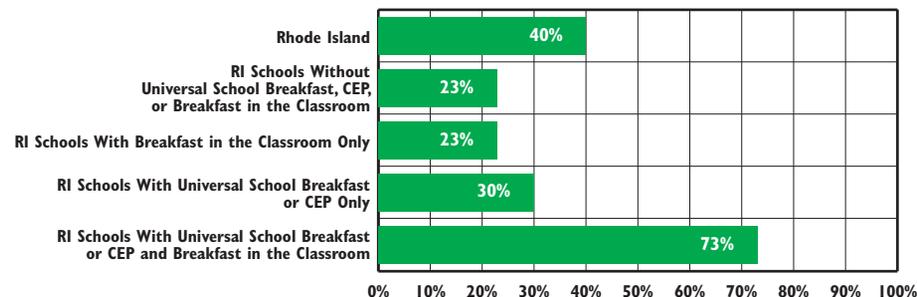
Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts every morning, and children in these families are at risk of falling behind their peers physically, cognitively, academically, emotionally, and socially. Children who are

undernourished are more likely to have poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast. They are more likely to have behavior, emotional, and academic problems, more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended.^{4,5} Nationally, kindergarteners in households experiencing food insecurity are more likely to be chronically absent than their peers in food-secure households.⁶

Rhode Island law requires that all public schools make breakfasts and lunches available to all students, including students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on their income (less than 130% of the federal poverty level for free meals and between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals).^{7,8}

During the 2015-2016 school year in Rhode Island, 51 low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 low-income students who participated in the School Lunch Program. Rhode Island ranks 33rd in the U.S. for participation in the School Breakfast Program, down from 30th last year. If Rhode Island increased low-income student participation in the School Breakfast Program from 50% to 70% of School Lunch Program participation, the state would receive \$2.8 million in additional federal funds to support the School Breakfast Program.⁹

Low-Income Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of School Food Services, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2016.

- ◆ **Universal School Breakfast Programs, which provide free breakfast to all children regardless of income, increase school breakfast participation by removing the stigma often associated with school breakfast and can reduce the administrative burden for schools.^{10,11} The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools and districts with 40% or more students identified as low-income or at-risk (i.e., homeless or in foster care) to provide free meals to all students and offers higher reimbursements. During the 2015-2016 school year, ten of the 96 eligible schools in Rhode Island were using CEP.¹² During the 2016-2017 school year, all schools in Central Falls, Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket, selected schools in three other districts, ten charter schools, and the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center and Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program offered universal school breakfast or CEP.¹³**
- ◆ **Making breakfast part of the school day is another proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation, reducing stigma, and increasing convenience. Some states have passed legislation requiring "breakfast after the bell."^{14,15} During the 2016-2017 school year, several Rhode Island districts offered breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go" breakfasts, bagged breakfasts, or breakfast on a cart in all or some of their schools.¹⁶**
- ◆ **During the summer, many low-income children lose access to the free and reduced-price meals they rely on during the school year. In Rhode Island, 20% of the children who participated in the School Lunch Program during the 2014-2015 school year participated in the 2015 Summer Nutrition Programs. During July 2015, 193,940 lunches were served through Summer Nutrition Programs, an 18% increase over the previous year.¹⁷**

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Table 14.

Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2016

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2016 ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	# OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	ESTIMATED LOW-INCOME AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,355	42	1%	196	16	8%
Bristol Warren	3,218	206	6%	1,048	164	16%
Burrillville	2,341	144	6%	789	112	14%
Central Falls**	2,589	1,419	55%	2,105	1,419	67%
Charlho	3,270	270	8%	612	175	29%
Coventry	4,713	443	9%	1,546	364	24%
Cranston**	10,415	2,689	26%	3,859	1,654	43%
Cumberland	4,568	448	10%	1,033	325	31%
East Greenwich	2,504	59	2%	146	39	27%
East Providence	5,238	1,166	22%	2,909	820	28%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,654	85	5%	219	47	21%
Foster	265	22	8%	49	*	18%
Foster-Glocester	1,147	69	6%	193	37	19%
Glocester	547	44	8%	72	27	38%
Jamestown	488	22	5%	50	11	22%
Johnston	3,190	351	11%	1,503	291	19%
Lincoln	3,002	244	8%	758	209	28%
Little Compton	246	0	<1%	29	0	<1%
Middletown	2,191	162	7%	719	131	18%
Narragansett	1,326	86	6%	259	56	22%
New Shoreham	120	18	15%	21	11	52%
Newport	2,198	399	18%	1,430	381	27%
North Kingstown	4,047	338	8%	885	273	31%
North Providence	3,493	614	18%	1,483	373	26%
North Smithfield	1,707	90	5%	294	57	19%
Pawtucket**	8,984	2,165	24%	6,234	1,744	28%
Portsmouth	2,464	95	4%	348	57	16%
Providence**	23,983	12,710	53%	20,719	11,915	58%
Scituate	1,305	36	3%	232	23	10%
Smithfield	2,384	93	4%	337	50	15%
South Kingstown	3,111	183	6%	524	160	31%
Tiverton	1,841	107	6%	583	83	14%
Warwick	9,124	591	6%	3,394	481	14%
West Warwick	3,474	546	16%	1,693	480	28%
Westerly	2,865	336	12%	935	296	32%
Woonsocket**	5,863	2,614	45%	4,268	2,116	50%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>7,024</i>	<i>3,114</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>4,726</i>	<i>2,338</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,746</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>1,188</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,419</i>	<i>18,907</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>33,326</i>	<i>17,193</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>91,811</i>	<i>9,998</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>28,148</i>	<i>7,212</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>142,142</i>	<i>32,505</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>67,523</i>	<i>27,228</i>	<i>40%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, October 2016.

*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

**These districts offer Universal School Breakfast or participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in all of their schools.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

The October 2016 enrollment and number of low-income students come from RIDE's official October 1 enrollment census. Data are not comparable to Factbooks prior to 2011.

"Estimated Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2016. "Estimated Low-Income Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced-price meals who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2016.

Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program. To participate in the Reduced-Price Breakfast Program, students' household income must fall between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty guideline. For the Free Breakfast Program, household income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guideline. Children in foster care, households receiving SNAP benefits and households participating in the Rhode Island Works Program are automatically eligible for free meals.

References are on page 177.