

Fast Break to Learning

School Breakfast Program

1999-2000
Executive Summary

A report of the first-year results
of Fast Break to Learning



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

Children
Families & Learning

A nutritious breakfast is as critical as textbooks and computers for students to be ready for each day's educational opportunities.

When Minnesota voters propelled Governor Ventura into office, he knew that students, like everyone, need to be “fueled up” with a nutritious breakfast for a productive day. Offering a nutritious breakfast to all students at little or no charge was identified as an “idea that works.” Based on the demonstrated success of this program at a limited number of schools, the Governor proposed expansion into the current Fast Break to Learning program. There are now over 300 elementary schools across the state that have received Fast Break to Learning funds.

Breakfast for all students at no charge was an idea that began to show promise in 1994, when the Minnesota Legislature first provided funding for six elementary schools.

- With the breakfast program easily accessible to all, students were more attentive and ready to learn.
- Teachers, knowing that the majority of learning takes place in the morning, recognized the contributions of the expanded breakfast service.
- Many parents found the timing of the school breakfast to be more consistent with their children's eating routines.
- The school breakfast programs were often an opportunity for community and parental participation, as well as the kick-off to a successful educational day.

Minnesota



Fast Break to Learning supports the Governor's Big Plan for the best K-12 public education in the nation. Students are ready to learn at the start of each school day and, ultimately, the level of student achievement is raised. Healthy children are supported by school breakfast programs, including an emphasis on consumption of more fruits and vegetables. Daily access to school breakfast in a safe, nurturing environment enhances the capacity of all families to provide a stable environment for their children.

University of Minnesota Research Results

Research on the first year of Fast Break to Learning was conducted by a collaboration of the MN Department of Children, Families & Learning, and three research groups from the University of Minnesota:

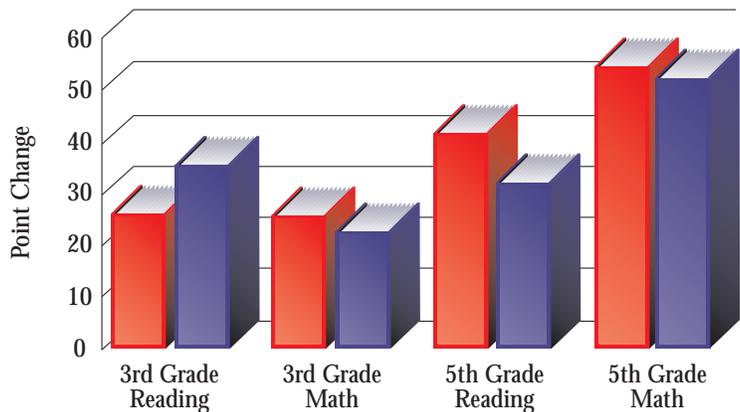
- Office of Educational Accountability
- Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement
- School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology

Student Achievement

Reading, writing, and math components of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test were used to measure the academic achievement of 3rd and 5th graders at Fast Break to Learning schools and at a control group of schools.

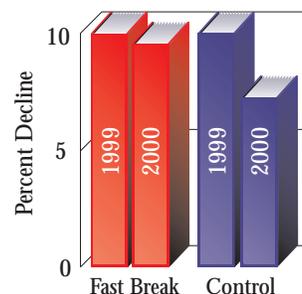
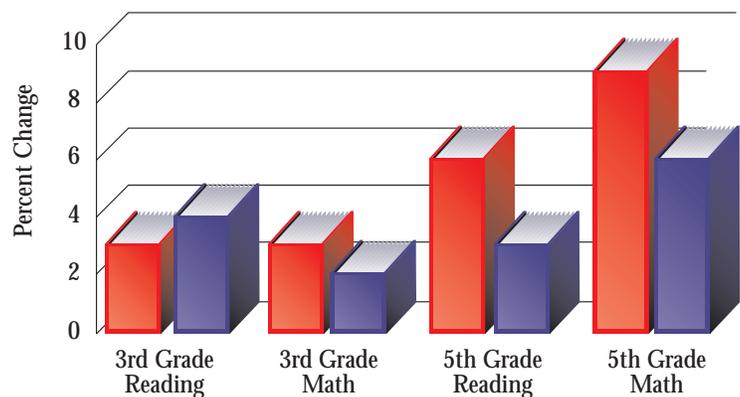
Achievement Gains 1999 to 2000 ▶

In three out of four reading and math tests, Fast Break to Learning schools improved academic achievement more than the control group of schools.



Percent Gain at or above Level 2 ▶ 1999 to 2000

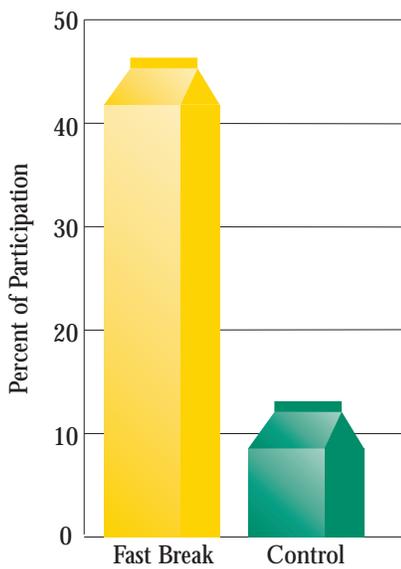
In the same three out of four reading and math tests, a higher percentage of students tested at Level 2 reading and math.



◀ Fifth Grade Writing Scores 1999-2000

Although 5th grade writing scores declined across the board for all schools, scores at Fast Break to Learning schools stayed much closer to the previous year's scores.

Percent of Students Participating

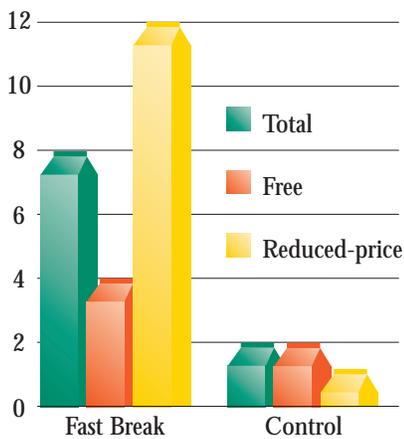


Participation and Attendance

Fast Break to Learning schools attract more students to the breakfast program and "keep 'em coming," compared to control schools. For the first year, the average participation rate at Fast Break to Learning schools was 46 percent, compared to only 12 percent for control schools. Growth in average participation at Fast Break to Learning schools is expected to continue as schools become more familiar with the program. Many Fast Break to Learning schools already have over 90 percent of their student population participating.

Students eligible for reduced-price school meals showed the highest increase in participation. These are students from lower-income households that do not participate in MFIP or food stamps. This increase is not surprising because student data has shown a growing number of households at the high end of the lower-income range, sometimes referred to as "working poor" households. These may for the most part be families whose MFIP or food stamp assistance ended as the families transitioned from welfare to work. Students from these lower-income households represent a growing portion of the students participating in school breakfast and contributing to academic achievement and other associated benefits.

Participation Increase by Category



Fast Break to Learning was not shown to increase attendance rates, as Minnesota is in the enviable position of already having an average 95 percent attendance rate.

Integrating Breakfast into the School Day

Traditionally, school breakfast has been served in the school cafeteria before the school day begins. When implementing Fast Break to Learning, schools have experimented with the scheduling and location of breakfast so that it becomes a vital part of the educational day at the school.



Forty-nine percent of Fast Break to Learning schools reported being able to offer some or all of breakfast after the school day started, either in the cafeteria or in the classroom. Only seven percent of other schools reported being able to integrate any portion of the breakfast program into the school day.

Fast Break to Learning schools tended to adapt their breakfast time to multiple uses, such as:

- Taking attendance
- Announcements
- Scheduling
- Class discussions
- Reading

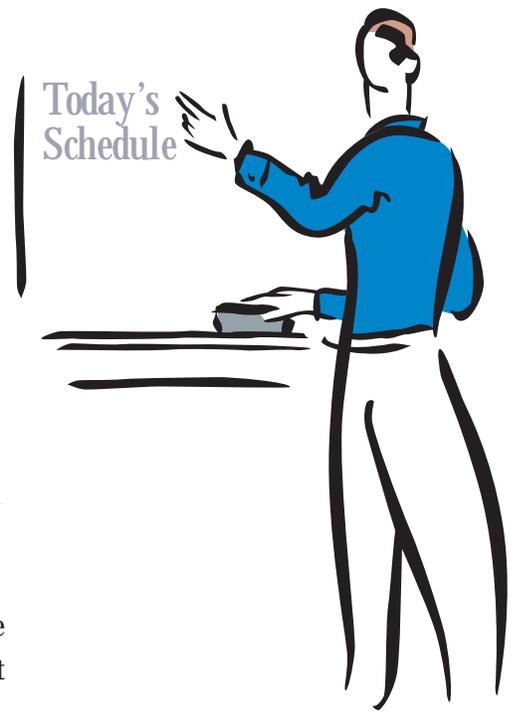
Reducing Barriers to Student Participation

Fast Break to Learning schools generally reported fewer barriers to participation in the school breakfast program than control schools. The most frequently identified barriers were bus schedules and lack of time. Each school's situation is unique, with no one particular barrier reported by more than one quarter of the schools.

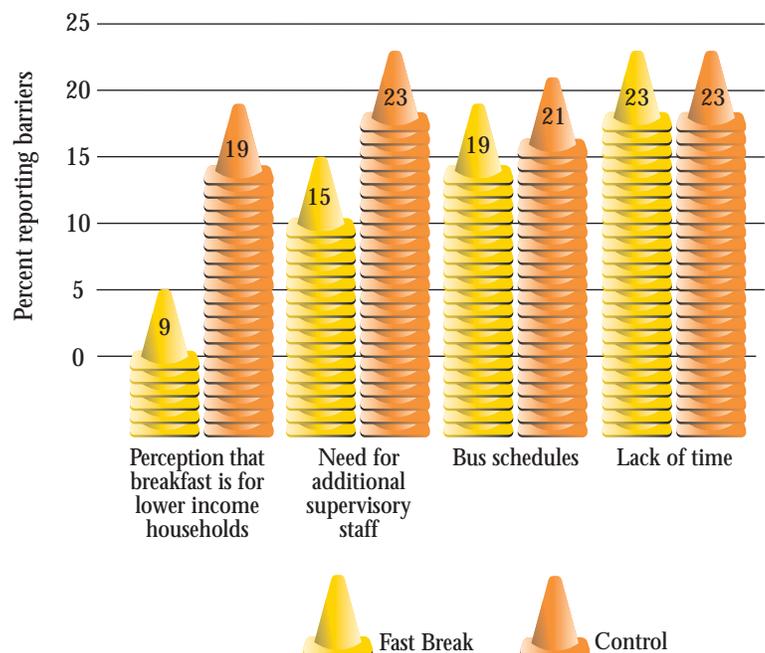
Also, perceptions of students, families, and staff about school breakfast are often barriers to participation. When students perceive that school breakfast is primarily intended for children from low-income households, or is for any reason socially unacceptable, participation suffers. These perceptions were reported less frequently at Fast Break to Learning schools.

Each Fast Break to Learning school worked to eliminate or minimize breakfast barriers so that every student has access and feels encouraged to participate.

- Principals and food service personnel at Fast Break to Learning schools reported being more successful in accommodating competing school needs in ways that would maintain students' access to breakfast.
- Equal "eligibility" to the breakfast program for all students at Fast Break to Learning schools resulted in an increase in student, family, and staff perceptions that school breakfast is available for every student. Without these perceptions, many students who need breakfast do not participate.



Barriers to breakfast participation



Benefits Observed by Principals

Ninety-seven percent of principals at Fast Break to Learning schools agreed or strongly agreed that their schools benefited from the program. The specific benefits most often recognized by principals were decreased tardiness and decreased negative behavior in the morning.



"We believe nutritious breakfast allows kids to perform better at school."

Principal,
Armatage Elementary School,
Minneapolis



"School breakfast is vital to our educational programs."

Principal,
B.D.R.S.H. - Sacred Heart
Elementary School, Renville



"Because of the program, parents are assured their kids are eating well."

Principal,
Christ the King Elementary
School, Browerville



"A much larger percentage of students now eat and there is no stigma involved as all students have the option to eat."

Principal,
Shingle Creek
Elementary School,
Minneapolis



"It does make a difference in children's attention spans and I'm sure it makes a difference in what they're able to learn in the morning. It's a great program and we love it."

Principal,
Oak Grove Elementary
School, Bloomington



"ALL kids could benefit from this program."

Principal,
Paul Bunyan
Elementary School,
Bemidji

Conclusion

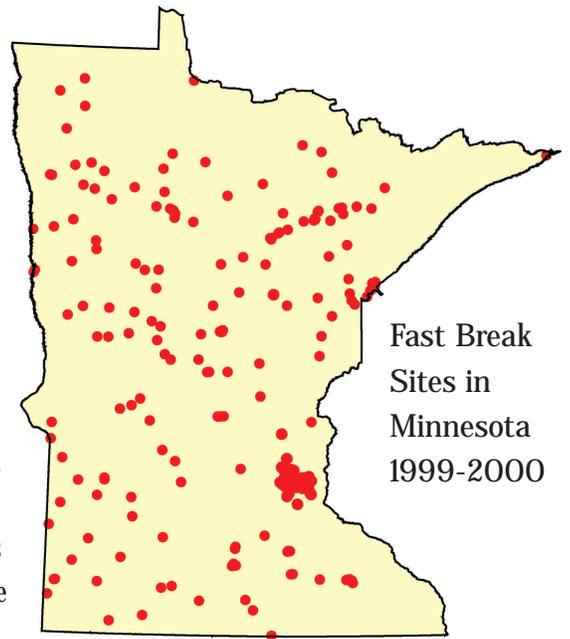
Each school day, Fast Break to Learning has helped ready more than forty thousand Minnesota students for a full morning of learning.

First-year research results continue to support the link between the availability of a school breakfast program and student health, learning readiness, and academic achievement.

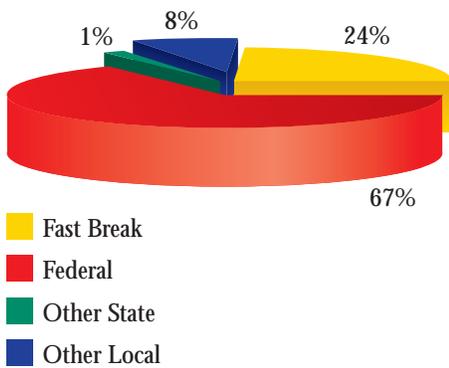
Current funding does not allow for all eligible schools to participate in the Fast Break to Learning School Breakfast Program.

Fast Break Facts

- Governor Jesse Ventura proposed a Fast Break to Learning initiative in 1999. Participating schools would offer breakfasts to all students at little or no charge and would receive funding for 75 percent of the estimated loss in student payments. Elementary schools with 33 percent or more of their lunches served to students approved for free or reduced-price school meals would be eligible for funding.
- The Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$5 million for the 2000-01 biennium. The \$2.5 million for the first year allowed participation by 326 elementary schools. These schools served over 40,000 breakfasts each school day. An additional 307 elementary schools were eligible for Fast Break to Learning, but could not participate due to limited funding.
- Federal reimbursements drawn down through the School Breakfast Program almost quadrupled at Fast Break to Learning schools, to \$6.9 million in the first year, due to the increased student participation rate of 46 percent.



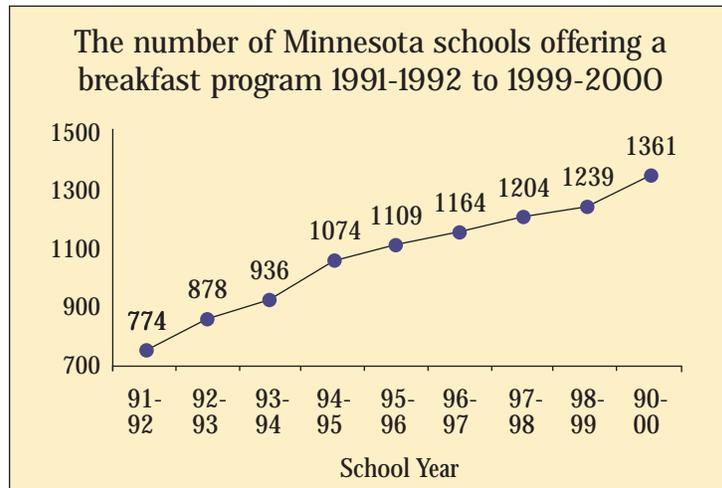
Portion of School Breakfast Costs Paid by Fast Break to Learning (at Fast Break to Learning schools only)



- Fast Break to Learning funds represented 24 percent of the total revenues received by participating schools to cover breakfast costs. The majority of costs for school breakfast are met by the regular reimbursements claimed through the federal School Breakfast Program.

School Breakfast Facts

- The School Breakfast Program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, administered in Minnesota by the MN Department of Children, Families & Learning. Schools plan meals that meet established nutritional guidelines including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- The number of schools offering the School Breakfast Program has increased rapidly since 1990.



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This report is based on the results of the evaluation of the first year of the Fast Break to Learning school breakfast program, conducted by:

- Office of Educational Accountability (OEA), University of Minnesota, 1313 5th St. SE, Suite B1, Minneapolis, MN 55414.
- Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), University of Minnesota, 275 Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.
- School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, University of Minnesota, 1300 South Second Street, Suite 300, Minneapolis, MN 55454.

Copies of this summary are available from the MN Department of Children, Families & Learning, Food and Nutrition Service, 1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266, or by calling (651) 582-8526 or (800) 366-8922 (Minnesota callers), or email us at fns@state.mn.us.

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Upon request, this information can be made available in alternative formats. TTY (651) 582-8201