

Boca Raton News

Palm Beach County School District offers new breakfast meals for elementary students

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by Nicol Jenkins

Breakfast is known to be the most important meal of the day.

Palm Beach County School District officials agree.

And to ensure students get a healthy morning meal, the district will offer a new product to its elementary students.

Dubbed Breakfast Breaks, the product was currently added every Monday in Palm Beach County elementary school breakfast programs, in addition to the many other nutritious choices. This new product is not only nutritious, but provides children with 25 percent or more of the recommended levels of key nutrients. Breakfast Breaks contains a cereal bowl pack, a serving of 100 percent fruit juice with no preservatives, and another bread/grain component. In addition, students may choose low-fat or fat free milk. One Breakfast Breaks package has 275 Kcal.

"We're in the business of feeding kids and our job is to look for creative outlets to get kids excited about participating in school breakfast and lunch," said Steve Bonino, Director of School Food Service for the School District of Palm Beach County.

Bonino said breakfast is vital for youngsters.

"It gets them ready to start the day," he said.

Research backs up Bonino's assumption. Studies show that eating a balanced breakfast regularly boosts brainpower, improves test scores, improves speed, memory skills and concentration, lowers rates of absence and tardiness, reduces discipline problems and school nurse visits, and helps reduce childhood obesity.

Each day, the School Food Service Department offers an excellent breakfast menu that provides the recommended balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat at every school.

Palm Beach County isn't the only one to promote healthy eating.

Education Commissioner John L. Winn also recently encouraged students throughout Florida to eat a healthy breakfast. The Department of Education's "Excellence Begins with Breakfast" campaign encourages schools and students to participate in school breakfast programs.

"The beginning of a new year is a great opportunity for schools to launch the school breakfast program," said Commissioner Winn. "Research shows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. There is a clear link between eating a healthy breakfast and being ready to learn."

Other research shows that children who eat breakfast have improved memory, problem-solving skills, verbal fluency and creative abilities. Studies also suggest that skipping breakfast contributes to obesity, particularly among adolescents.

Traditional meals served in the school cafeteria are still the most popular. However, many schools are now reaching out to provide meals in new ways such as offering breakfast in the classroom or "grab-n-go" meals from moving carts or kiosks. All are convenient, quick ways to ensure students enjoy a nutritious, balanced breakfast and start the day on the right foot.

All public elementary and many secondary schools in Florida offer a school breakfast program with nutritious foods to all students. Students who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches also qualify for free- or reduced-price breakfast. In Florida, approximately 500,000 school breakfast meals are served to students as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's School Breakfast Program.

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