



DISTRICT: Fremont RE-1, Cañon City, CO
MANAGER OF NUTRITION SERVICES: Paula Buser
EXPANDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM: Free Breakfast; Breakfast in the Classroom; "Breakfast at the Bell"

★ **BACKGROUND**

Prior to the 2003-04 school year, only 12% of students – less than 100 total – participated in the traditional before-school breakfast programs at two of Cañon City School District schools. Meanwhile, teachers and school health administrators were hearing complaints from students about stomach aches around mid-morning. That's when Paula Buser, the district's nutrition manager, learned about the Expanding Breakfast program and decided to change the schools' traditional before-school breakfast program.

★ **IMPLEMENTATION**

Buser assessed her schools' needs and now offers breakfast in the classroom at an elementary school. She offers a different breakfast program at the new K-8 school. This larger school means the breakfast program now reaches an additional 300 middle school students. It also meant Buser needed to re-think offering breakfast in the classroom, since it was logistically impossible to deliver breakfast to all classrooms in the nine grade levels. Instead, Buser established a Grab 'n' Go-style breakfast she dubbed "Breakfast at the Bell." The school has two start times, and a breakfast bell rings 15 minutes prior to each start. When the bell rings, the kids know it's time to grab their breakfasts from food carts located at the school entrance and eat in the commons area with their friends. A food service staff member monitors and assists students. Using grants from Western Dairy Association to buy food and beverage carts, plastic bins and additional coolers, Buser's team delivers nearly 13,000 breakfasts per month to the two schools. She offers low-fat chocolate and white milk as well as fat-free and occasionally other flavored milks with breakfast for students and teachers to eat together before the day begins.

★ **IMPACT**

Before the Expanding Breakfast programs were implemented, less than 100 students participated in the traditional, before-school breakfast program. After the introduction of Breakfast in the Classroom and Breakfast at the Bell at the two schools, the number of breakfasts served daily increased to about 650, with a participation rate of up to 85%. Because most students choose milk with their breakfasts, milk consumption has increased substantially and as a result, students are consuming the nutrients they need to grow and have strong bones. "I am sure that many kids wouldn't drink milk at all if not for the breakfast program," said Buser.

Teachers have also noticed positive changes. Tardiness has decreased and students have fewer complaints of hunger and stomach pains. "Students get a healthy start to their day by receiving a quality and balanced nutritional breakfast including fruit, whole grains, and protein so that they are prepared to become professional students in our classrooms. Our kids look forward to their school breakfast each morning," states Larry Otte, Principal at Harrison School.

★ **WORDS OF ADVICE**

"It's imperative that you get support from the schools and staff before implementing a program like this," said Buser. "As I like to say: Go slow to go fast. Take time to plan appropriately and involve all stakeholders. Also, make it as simple and as streamlined as possible for the teachers."