



DISTRICT: **Campbell County No. 1, Gillette, Wyo.**
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES: **Sue Harter**
EXPANDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM: **Breakfast in the Classroom**

★ BACKGROUND

The nutrition services department at Campbell County School District No. 1 has a slogan: "Good Nutrition Is Our Mission." But one elementary school in particular was having trouble meeting its goal. Only a small percentage of students at Meadowlark Elementary were participating in the school's traditional hot breakfast program. Considering that research shows children who eat breakfast perform better at school than those who skip breakfast, administrators sought to figure out a way to make breakfast at school a more appealing option.

★ IMPLEMENTATION

To encourage more students to take and eat breakfast in the morning, Nutrition Services Director Sue Harter began offering breakfast in the classroom at the elementary school. Nutrition Services delivers baskets of cereal, string cheese, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or another entrée along with 1% white or 1% chocolate milk and fruit to every classroom by 8:30 a.m. School starts at 9:00 and while teachers take attendance and make morning announcements, everyone enjoys their breakfasts. At the end of breakfast, teachers empty the trash and leave it outside the door for the custodial staff to pick up.

★ IMPACT

Since the breakfast-in-the-classroom program began participation in school breakfast has nearly doubled, amounting to nearly the entire student body. Despite early fears about spillage and waste, teachers find that spilled milk and juice does not seem to be a problem. Additionally, removing trash cans immediately after breakfast alleviated fears about food waste odors throughout the school day. Since this was a new program, Harter anticipated that changes would need to be made. She is working with the teachers to address their concerns, such as offering fewer sweet foods and more menu options. However, most teachers are pleased with the new breakfast program. "We're all just happy that more kids are eating breakfast," said Harter.

Given the success of this program, Harter is considering offering breakfast in the classroom at a few more schools next year, including an alternative high school.

★ WORDS OF ADVICE

Listen to the teachers and work with them; they set the tone in the classroom. If they don't like the breakfast program, the students might not like it, either, and won't participate.

Understand that with any change, there will be some resistance. "Some students complained about only offering cold breakfasts, not hot like we used to," said Harter. "But look at our numbers – our participation has ballooned since we switched from hot breakfast in the cafeteria to cold in the classroom. They may be complaining, but they're also eating breakfast in school when they used to skip it."