



SCHOOL: Victor School K-12, Victor, Montana
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES: Maria Stover
EXPANDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM: Free Breakfast; Modified Grab-n-Go

★ BACKGROUND

Although 68 percent of Victor's K-12 student body qualifies for free or reduced cost lunch, until last year only about 60 students – 16 percent of the student body – were taking advantage of breakfast offered at school.

★ IMPLEMENTATION

In spring 2008 Maria Stover, Food Service Director, implemented a free Grab-n-Go breakfast available to all students before school. Approximately 230 students – 86 percent of the students – began eating breakfast at school. In Fall 2008 she expanded the Grab-n-Go breakfast to include first period, allowing late arrivers to eat breakfast. In September 2009, 355 of the 380 student population showed up for breakfast. Breakfast choices are set out on the cafeteria line. Most foods are portable and minimally-wrapped. Students choose to eat in the cafeteria or take breakfast with them. Daily offerings include a variety of fresh fruit, cups of whole-grain cold cereal, graham crackers and, of course, wholesome milk. Stover offers hot oatmeal with berries twice a week. Other rotating items include whole-grain muffin bars baked on site, bagels with cream cheese, soft pretzels with cheese and yogurt with granola are some of the alternative options on the line. Stover has promoted the breakfast at board meetings and in newsletters to parents along with daily announcements.

★ IMPACT

Superintendent Orville Getz loves it. Principal Dan Johnston agrees. "I believe the Victor School breakfast program to be a model program for other schools to follow. Feeding the high percentage of students we do shows the monumental success of this program. Our students have a longer school day than most schools. Combining that with the after-school activities this age group participates in makes the meals they receive at school that much more important. I support the program 100 percent." Teachers bring entire classes down to ensure that all are eating breakfast. Students say it is awesome and are incredulous that it is free. Western Dairy Association awarded a grant which helped Stover purchase a warming cabinet for hot foods. Because of federal reimbursements, it is a financially sound situation and Stover has been able to contribute to funding a recent kitchen remodel.

★ WORDS OF ADVICE

Go for it, but you do need buy-in from the administration and staff. Families need to complete the free/reduced lunch application. Promote it heavily.