School Based Nutrition and Child Hunger Relief Programs: School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15, section 1G (f), and Chapter 131 of the Acts of 2010, line item 7053-1925

August 2013
August 2013

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit the School Based Nutrition and Child Hunger Relief Programs School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach Report pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 15, section 1G (f), and Chapter 131 of the Acts of 2010, line item 7053 – 1925.

This report reflects the School Breakfast Programs from school year 2010-11 and Summer Food Service Programs in Fiscal Year 2012. Throughout the period, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education addressed the benefits of the school breakfast and summer food service programs as nutritional supports for families in the Commonwealth. Under the direction of the Office for Nutrition, Health and Safety Programs, the child nutrition outreach program coordinators at Project Bread worked together with school district staff and community organizations to expand and improve current programs, and implement new campaigns and resources to address childhood hunger in Massachusetts.

Continued monitoring of economic trends, and meal benefit eligibility levels provide the opportunity to forecast need in all cities and towns. The difficult economic status in many communities challenged program sponsorship. Collaborative activities with coordination of resources, however, sustained program participation.

During the 2010-11 school year, the ninth year of the Universal School Breakfast Program, the Department provided funding for the Universal Breakfast Program to 43 school districts, offering a nutritious breakfast to more than 119,991 Massachusetts children in 269 schools. These funds were used to provide breakfast to all children in schools with a high percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price school meals. The schools developed partnerships among administrators, food service personnel, and other school staff to make breakfast a regular part of the school day. School administrators and teachers comment that since the inclusion of breakfast, student achievement has increased, students are making fewer visits to the nurse, and absenteeism continues to decline.

School breakfast brochures translated to include Chinese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese, updated resource materials for community agencies, food service directors, and schools. Breakfast materials were offered to community agencies, food service directors, principals, and homeless liaisons throughout the Commonwealth to promote the benefits of starting the school day with a nutritious breakfast.
Outreach staff continued to work with food service directors and schools to promote serving breakfast as part of the school day. Overall 1,629 schools\(^1\) offered a breakfast program to students using various models ranging from universally free for all students in the school to others which included reduced price, and charging for the purchase of breakfast.

For summer programs, the key to success is the link to community-based activities and the comprehensive operation of these summer sites. Additional federal reimbursement dollars have been made available through continual streamlined program reimbursement. Massachusetts received an increase in federal reimbursement from $6,426,928 for Fiscal Year 2010 to $6,616,258 in Fiscal Year 2011. Increased marketing, food presentation and acceptability, locally grown produce, and enhanced nutrient standards, have improved the overall food service operations and encouraged sustained participation. In more programs, nutrition education has been integrated into the summer day.

Providing grant funds to hire outreach coordinators for local programs has resulted in increase in the number of sites, targeted marketing campaigns, and expanded community involvement in the Summer Food Service Program. The availability of additional grant opportunities from various entities for these programs has allowed for the development of effective strategies to improve nutrition programs, outreach, and accessibility in urban and rural locations. The Commonwealth’s support of these programs contributed greatly to the ability to reach and serve hungry children across the Commonwealth in this strained economic climate.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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\(^1\) Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health & Safety Programs, 2011
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Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature: *School Based Nutrition and Child Hunger Relief Programs: School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach* pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 131 of the Acts of 2010, line item 7053-1925, which reads in part:

For the school breakfast program for public and nonpublic schools and for grants to improve summer food programs during the summer school vacation period; provided, that funds shall be expended for the summer food service outreach program and the school breakfast outreach program; provided further, that within the summer food program, priority shall be given to extending such programs for the full summer vacation period and promoting increased participation in such programs…; provided further, that funds shall be expended for the universal school breakfast program in which all children in schools receiving funds under the program shall be provided free, nutritious breakfasts at no cost to them; provided further, that subject to regulations of the board that specify time and learning standards, breakfasts shall be served during regular school hours; provided further, that participation shall be limited to those elementary schools mandated to serve breakfast under section 1C of chapter 69 of the General Laws where 60 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federally-funded school meals program; provided further, that the department shall select school sites for programs authorized by this item not later than November 16, 2010, and shall report to the house and senate committees on ways and means on the preliminary results of these grants…

And M.G.L. Chapter 15, section 1G (f):

The commissioner shall submit a report to the clerk of the house of representatives who shall forward the same to the joint committee on education, arts and humanities on or before December thirty-first, nineteen hundred-four and on December thirty-first of each year thereafter. The report shall include, but not be limited to: the percentage of eligible children participating in school breakfast programs statewide during the previous school year: the amount of additional federal dollars brought into the state by all school breakfast and summer food service outreach activities; the number of additional school breakfast and summer food service programs started in the preceding year; and the increase in participation in summer food service and school breakfast program.
Part I: Development, Goal, and Objectives of Outreach Program

An Act establishing school-based Nutrition and Child Hunger Relief Programs was signed into law on January 14, 1993. This law, Chapter 414, Acts of 1992, directed the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) to establish a School Breakfast and a Summer Food Service Outreach Program. Its overall goal is to increase participation in both programs, with the stated emphasis on increasing the participation of needy children. The Department, in keeping with the mandate, established the following objectives:

1. Improve marketing strategies to increase participation in the School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach Activities.
2. Promote the program as a valuable resource for all children, families, schools, and communities, including homeless and migrant families.
3. Increase the number of children who participate in the State Universal School Breakfast Program (SUSBP) by promoting breakfast during the school day.
4. Work with meal providers to offer more nutritious and appetizing meals.
5. Recognize individuals who have been instrumental in the progress that has been made, including food service directors and administrators.
6. Assist school districts and appropriate organizations in sponsoring and expanding the programs.
7. Increase the involvement of superintendents, principals, and other local administrative and advocate groups in promoting and supporting school breakfast as an essential part of the school day, and the Summer Food Service Program as a community resource.
8. Develop creative strategies to remove barriers to program participation.
9. Review and improve current outreach materials, incorporating the use of technology.
10. Ensure that all activities and efforts are culturally sensitive to linguistic minorities.

The Department continued its contractual relationship with Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger, Inc., to assist in conducting its outreach efforts for 2010 through 2011.

Part II: School Breakfast Program Outreach Activities and Outcomes

During the 2010-2011 school year, the ninth year of the State Universal School Breakfast Program (SUSBP), the Department provided funding for the SUSBP to 43 school districts that were composed of 269 schools in which there were 119,991 participating children as Table 1 (below) indicates. There has been a 10.3 percent increase in the number of school districts that are participating in the SUSBP. This increase is accompanied by a 3.5 percent increase in the number of SUSBP schools and a 3.3 percent increase in participating children. This suggests that our outreach efforts are having a positive impact.

In order to qualify for the state program, the site must be an elementary school which had 60 percent or more free and reduced price applications the previous year, plus over 40 percent free and reduced meals served 2 years prior.
Table 1: Funding of State Universal School Breakfast Program (SUSBP) By Districts, Schools, and Children FY10 and FY11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2009-10</th>
<th>FY 2010-11</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Funding</td>
<td>$2,011,060</td>
<td>$2,011,060</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participating</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>+10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SUSBP Participating</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>+3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SUSBP Participating</td>
<td>116,168</td>
<td>119,991</td>
<td>+3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Massachusetts receives federal funds for the school breakfast program. Massachusetts school districts received an increase of federal severe need reimbursement from $29.8 million in Fiscal Year 2010 to $32.7 million in Fiscal Year 2011. Regular Federal breakfast program reimbursements increased from $35.7 million in Fiscal Year 2010 to $36.8 million in Fiscal Year 2011. The federal severe need reimbursement program is designed to provide breakfasts to students enrolled in schools that demonstrate extraordinary need as determined by federal poverty guidelines. The rules stipulate that the school site must demonstrate at least 40 percent of its students served meals were eligible for free or reduced price meals two years prior. The regular reimbursement program requires that students are eligible for free and reduced meals without regard to a certain percentage of students who are eligible for prior years. It also provides certain incentives that are related to conditions that favor schools serving more eligible students.

Although these three programs serve eligible students, they complement one another as they are oriented toward varying aspects of the eligible population as a whole. The state universal program, for example, is restricted by legislation to elementary school students.

The schools developed partnerships among administrators, food service personnel, and other school staff to make breakfast a regular part of the school day. School administrators and teachers continue to comment that with breakfast a priority of the school day, student achievement has increased, fewer visits to the nurse occur, and absenteeism has declined.

To ensure that all students start the day ready to learn, the Department remains confident that the most efficient and effective way to take full advantage of breakfast participation in the SUSBP is to offer breakfast in the classroom. The Office for Nutrition, Health and Safety Programs outreach staff have provided technical assistance to school districts to promote the breakfast program and its benefits through various resources including breakfast coordinators, promotions, outreach letters, flyers, and social media.

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2 Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health & Safety Programs, 2011

3 Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health & Safety Programs, 2011
Table 2, below, indicates that there has been steady, although relatively small, increases in the percentage of free or reduced price meals eligible children who have participated in the School Breakfast Program over the course of the last five years. Free meal eligibility is at 130 percent of the federal poverty guideline while reduced price eligibility is above 130 percent but limited to 185 percent of the federal poverty guideline. The percentage of students who participated remained steady at 48 percent for both Fiscal Year 2010 and for Fiscal Year 2011.

Table 2: Percent of Eligible Children Statewide Participating in School Breakfasts from FY 2007 to FY2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It continues to be challenging to address increased overall food costs and manage expenses to support high nutrient dense foods. Districts are assisted in calculating and managing program costs with the availability of the breakfast cost calculator and financial fact sheets for the School Breakfast Program located on the outreach website, www.meals4kids.org.

**School Meal Application Campaign**

In the year 2011, Child Nutrition Outreach Program staff or outreach coordinators met with school nutrition staff, principals, and community agencies to emphasize the importance of promoting the availability of school meal applications throughout the school year. Schools have been asked to remind parents through newsletters, direct contacts, school counselors, and menu memos, that as their household situations change, parents may still apply for meal benefits. Strategies were discussed to ensure that all eligible children had access to free or reduced price meals. These discussions included the school meal application promotion, categorical eligibility of homeless, runaway, and migrant youth, as well as the importance of sending school meal application information throughout the year.

For area eligibility for universal breakfast, the Department’s outreach coordinators identified schools in target communities that were close to the criteria. In order to work with them in developing a School Meal Application (SMA) campaign to increase SMA returns, outreach coordinators sent SMA information to the principals and school nutrition directors of these schools and met with them to discuss strategies for maximizing the return of applications. Prior to the start of the school year, outreach coordinators sent SMA information to Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) outreach coordinators in all targeted communities. Outreach coordinators conducted targeted SMA campaigns in 21 districts with 27 schools that were close to the criteria for SFSP area eligibility (50 percent F/R) or state universal breakfast eligibility (60 percent F/R, elementary schools only).

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4 Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health, and Safety Programs, 2011
The districts with schools having eligibility percentages in close proximities of the targeted range were: Cambridge, Clinton, Dennis-Yarmouth, Gardner, Gill-Montague, Leominster, Methuen, Mohawk Trail Regional School District, Quaboag Regional School District, Quincy, Randolph, Ware, and Wareham. Districts targeted for universal breakfast because eligibility percentages were within 5 percent of the eligibility criteria were: Brockton, Chicopee, Fall River, Holyoke, Medford, Orange, Ware, and Woburn.

This year, the SMA campaigns focused on high schools. These campaigns were intended to increase meal benefits and participation in schools where the number of school applications on file were not consistent with other community need information. Throughout the year, outreach coordinators worked with school nutrition directors and/or principals in these communities to discuss the importance of promoting SMAs throughout the year rather than focus solely on the start of the school year. Outreach coordinators provided a wide variety of materials to school nutrition directors and principals, and brainstormed strategies to ensure that all eligible children had access to school meals. After the campaign, coordinators followed up with the 27 targeted schools to track whether the meal eligibility percentage increased after SMA campaign activities. Outreach coordinators reported that out of the 27 schools targeted, 48 percent saw an increase in the number of free and reduced price meal applications on file. Notably, 2 out of the 9 elementary schools working to increase free or reduced price meal eligibility to greater than 60 percent of the student enrollment accomplished that goal while 4 of the 18 schools looking to reach the 50 percent eligibility for the summer program exceeded the target.

**Partnership Building and Community Outreach**

Outreach coordinators worked with the Better Information Group, the creator of HungerMaps.org, to complete the overlay of the new 2010 census data with the existing SFSP meal site locations. HungerMaps is a unique website that allows creators to display in the form of maps hunger related information in communities. In years past, outreach coordinators have used this site as a home for mapping SFSP meal sites throughout the Commonwealth, making it easy for users and staff to identify where meal sites are located within any given community. It assists in identifying where additional sites may be needed. This year the coordinators’ goal was to enhance the usability of the site. Outreach coordinators worked closely with a programmer from the Better Information Group to add several features to HungerMaps including a search function and an overlay of census data in existing community specific maps.

The search function enables users to search for meal sites within a specified radius of a street address. The addition of this feature will assist users to identify the sites located nearest to the address submitted. This feature assisted Project Bread’s Food Source Hotline staff to enter an address and provide the caller with the SFSP sites located closest to the given address when answering SFSP calls.

In addition, the census overlay allowed coordinators and meals4kids.org website users to easily identify census tract eligible areas. This expedited identifying area eligibility and allowed users to identify eligible areas that lack SFSP sites. This focuses the expansion of the SFSP program because it will streamline the documentation of proposed additional sites.
After consulting with school nutrition directors at three brainstorming sessions, outreach coordinators developed and added a resource sharing library to the meals4kids.org website to meet directors’ request to access materials developed and tested by their peers. The resource sharing page allows users to upload, view, or request peer-developed materials via the meals4kids.org website. In addition to highlighting the library in their breakfast brainstorm e-newsletter, the coordinators promoted the resource sharing library through an e-blast that was sent to 269 Massachusetts school nutrition directors. They also distributed the postcards to all attendees of the winter 2011 School Nutrition Association conference and to participants at the Worcester County Food Bank’s 10th Annual Partner Agency Conference on Hunger. In the months following the launch of the resource sharing library, the coordinators reported they had material submissions from several communities. These materials are reviewed and posted to provide assistance to all programs.

Outreach coordinators periodically featured school nutrition directors on meals4kids.org that are either implementing best practices or introducing innovation into their school breakfast or summer food service programs. This year the coordinators featured two school nutrition directors and one sponsor on the meals4kids.org website to highlight the work they were doing. The featured districts were the Ralph Mahar Regional School District and the Somerville Public Schools. The featured sponsor was the Open Door in Gloucester. Both districts, as well as the sponsor, were selected for the innovative programming and improved nutrition quality of school breakfast or SFSP meals.

At Ralph Mahar Regional School District, the district director implemented district-based understanding from scratch cooking and started serving hot breakfast three to four times per week. After doing so, the director indicated breakfast participation increased from 35-40 students per day to an average of 120 students per day.

Somerville implemented Project Bread’s Better Breakfast Initiative district wide. The Better Breakfast Initiative is designed to offer students a breakfast menu based on guidelines developed in consultation with the Nutrition Department at the Harvard School of Public Health and Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition. Somerville’s new breakfast menu features low-sugar cereals, skim or 1 percent milk, and fresh fruit options such as fruit smoothies, fruit salad, and assorted whole fruit. During school breakfast week, the district ran a fun school breakfast contest that rewarded students for eating school breakfast every day for a week in an effort to increase participation. As a result of the contest, a 22 percent daily average of breakfast participants has been noted by the district director.

As part of the summer food service program, The Open Door has worked hard to improve the nutritional value of the food served. Last summer, the program implemented “Deconstructing the Lunch Bag.” This was an opportunity to meet the ¾ cup requirement for fruit and/or vegetables at lunch, but to do it in a way that gave choice to children. Offering items such as kiwis, cactus, Jerusalem artichokes, and jicama in a salad bar, children were introduced to new foods. Incorporating choice into healthy food decisions makes healthy eating more enjoyable and a lifelong habit. By preparing some of the same choices in different ways, the vegetable may be accepted. Preparing foods in different ways allows children to be exposed to different textures and tastes. At the end of the summer, all of the children surveyed felt that they knew the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods.
Throughout Fiscal Year 2011, outreach coordinators continued to promote the School Breakfast Program and the SFSP through social media. Outreach coordinators maintained a Twitter account and a Facebook page to promote these programs and to post helpful information related to child nutrition. By the end of the fiscal year, the coordinators reported that there were 1,619 followers on Facebook and 1,121 different organizations as followers on Twitter.

Outreach coordinators held a school hunger roundtable meeting in the Dennis Yarmouth area. The purpose of the meeting was to elevate the issue of hunger within the school community, whose socioeconomic profile shifted significantly in the past decade. In attendance were the district superintendent, all district principals, the school nutrition directors, other school staff members, and the director of the Yarmouth Recreation Department. The meeting focused on innovative ways to increase breakfast participation in schools with 50 percent of the student enrollment eligible for free or reduced price meals. All members of the meeting were engaged and offered ideas and suggestions on how to meet the desired goals. The attendees were very receptive to the idea of breakfast model changes but have not committed to making any change for Fiscal Year 2011. However, after the outreach coordinators provided further consultations with the School Nutrition Director, recreation director, and school guidance counselor during the spring, the community decided to run a program with at least one open SFSP site in Fiscal Year 2013.

During Fiscal Year 2011, outreach coordinators worked to insure that all materials pertaining to the marketing of the School Breakfast or Summer Food Service Programs would be printed in the various languages frequently spoken by the students and their parents. The distributed materials were printed in the following languages: Chinese, Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Part III: Summer Food Service Program Outreach Activities and Outcomes

The Department held the annual SFSP Kickoff event in February 2011. Nearly 75 sponsors, vendors, and supporters of the Summer Food Service Program along with representatives from USDA, the Department, Project Bread, and numerous presenters attended the event in Marlborough, MA. The year’s Kickoff focused on giving sponsors new and innovative ideas to incorporate into their communities’ summer program. The event included numerous features and activities, including updates from the Department, a PowerPoint slideshow collection of SFSP photos, and supported food safety practices. It also provided resources that are available at no or low cost to supply the summer food service outreach program with activities to engage children. Some of the organizations made presentations at the Kickoff event.

At the Kickoff, the outreach coordinators presented the free outreach materials designed as part of the original work plan and intended to heighten program visibility. New initiatives for raising awareness and promoting SFSP were presented. These included on-site interns, outreach planning, programming support, SFSP site list and mapping, the resource sharing library, and grants. After the event, the coordinators sent out a summary letter to all attendees including sponsors, exhibitors, and presenters. They also sent out 12 Kickoff information packets to
potential sponsors and individuals who were unable to attend the day’s event. Finally, the coordinators created a Kickoff page on the meals4kids.org website, listing all the information presented at the event.

The outreach coordinators recruited college student interns to serve as SFSP outreach coordinators for sponsors in targeted communities. Sponsors were asked to fill out a quick form to determine their interest in working with an intern during the summer. As a result, student interns were placed with sponsors in Brockton, Framingham, and Somerville to assist with outreach.

Coordinators enlisted the help of a student intern from the Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition to work within the Somerville community around SFSP outreach. Each year, the outreach coordinators develop outreach tools to be used by sponsors and sites to help increase awareness and participation at sites. In efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of these outreach tools, the coordinators worked closely with the intern who used different outreach materials and techniques and reported back on acceptance. Since late summer is often the time sponsors report a decline in participation, the intern worked to re-energize “August at the Foss Park” site in Somerville. The intern worked to create a comprehensive calendar of events and activities that took place every day at the site for the entire month of August. At the end of the summer, the intern provided the outreach coordinators with a detailed account of which techniques, outreach strategies and activities worked and which did not work as well. During this time, the intern also implemented the newly developed nutrition education tool kit. The outreach coordinators plan to use this information to update current outreach tools and strategies and take into consideration the findings when creating new resources.

The outreach coordinators worked with Gardner and Webster to start a new SFSP, and worked with Adams, Barnstable, Gill-Montague, North Adams, and Ware to expand existing programs. In an effort to provide mentors for the summer program administration, the coordinators consulted with existing sponsors to connect them with programs that are interested in becoming new SFSP sites.

As a result of these community meetings and additional phone and email communication with sponsors of other communities, the outreach coordinators reported that 32 sponsors in 33 communities agreed to take on a total of 81 additional sites serving children. This included the following communities: Boston, Brockton, Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, Fall River, Fitchburg, Framingham, Gardner, Gloucester, Greenfield, Haverhill, Jamaica Plain, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Mattapan, New Bedford, Peabody, Plymouth, Quincy, Revere, Roslindale, Salem, Somerville, Southbridge, Stoughton, Springfield, Webster, West Springfield, and Worcester.

The outreach coordinators also worked with several communities to either recruit new SFSP sponsors or introduce the program to the community for the first time. As a result of these efforts, there were four new sponsors this summer in Webster, West Springfield, Peabody, and Stoughton. Three new sites in Milford and Marlborough received meals through Framingham Public Schools. Another sponsor from a nearby community has taken on three Gardner sites, two of which are open sites.
The work that the Department has done to establish Summer Food Service sites, with the support of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, has been fruitful. Table 3 (below), illustrates the steady climb in the number of sites since 2007. In that year, there were 780 sites and in 2011 there were 841 sites.

Table 3: Number of Participating Summer Food Service Program Sites from Fiscal Years 2007 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Sites</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project Bread received a large grant from the Walmart Foundation that provided in-kind support to the MA summer program to increase SFSP participation among teens and preteens in Boston. As part of this grant, outreach coordinators utilized a text messaging campaign to share information with teens (their preferred method of communication) about SFSP meal site locations and times. To advertise the service, the outreach team worked with designers to develop a billboard and a bus shelter advertisement that were then placed throughout Boston between the end of June and the end of August. From the seven billboard advertisements as well as seven bus shelter ads located throughout East Boston, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury this summer, three hundred and thirty-six (336) texts were received.

This year, the outreach coordinators distributed over 9,000 incentives to 59 sponsors across the state including, jump ropes, beach balls, frisbees, and crayon carousels. These incentives were used at over 550 open sites.

The coordinators also sent out an e-blast statewide to 1,648 Superintendents, Principals, and school nutrition directors informing them that with the new Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, schools are now required to promote the SFSP, if one exists in their community. The e-blast provided sample materials such as a letter to be sent home to households, a multilingual flyer, and ConnectEd messages in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. A total of 487 recipients opened the e-blast. Sponsors in the following communities said they were going to use ConnectEd to promote SFSP: Fitchburg, Lawrence, Lowell, Plymouth, Quincy, Webster, and Woburn.

Part IV: Nutrition Outreach Activities and Outcomes

In order to connect local farmers with SFSP sponsors to increase the availability of fresh produce through school and summer meals, outreach coordinators continued to work with the following targeted communities: Adams-Cheshire, Ashland, Boston, Fitchburg, Gloucester, Peabody, Revere, Randolph, Somerville, and Southbridge. Their efforts and others are consistent with the Massachusetts Legislature’s 2010 bill that was passed to support the Mass Farm to School Project, which is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

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5Source: Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health and Safety Programs, 2011
The bill includes a provision for preferential purchasing of products grown in Massachusetts and instructs MDAR to collect data to facilitate the process of local farms and public schools doing business together.

This year, the outreach coordinators continued to promote the use of locally grown foods in schools as well as summer meals. Mass Farm to School confirmed that 216 public school districts reported preferentially purchasing locally in school year 2010-11. These districts serve 614,710 students or 66 percent of the public school students enrolled in the state\textsuperscript{6}. Sixty-four districts reported purchasing produce locally for the first time. The products purchased by schools vary but the most common items purchased are fruits and vegetables: apples, pears, peaches, cranberries, strawberries, tomatoes, lettuce, squash (summer and winter), corn, cucumbers, carrots, and root vegetables.

In efforts to support sponsors interested in serving locally grown foods over the summer, the coordinators offered an incentive grant for communities new to this resource. This summer, four communities worked with local farms. These communities were Leominster, Fall River, Gloucester, and Stoughton. The coordinators will continue to work closely with Mass Farm to School to connect interested school and summer contacts with appropriate local farmers.

Additional federal funds were accessed through a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) opportunity to reach rural locations. Based on a prior pilot project in Franklin County, a home delivered meals program was initiated in 2010-11 in Barnstable County. The Project is in collaboration with the Barnstable Public Schools, which engaged the services of a WIC nutrition coordinator for Barnstable County to conduct direct outreach to the district’s families. In accomplishing her work, the coordinator used materials that encouraged families to contact her if they were interested in participating in the project. She also conducted outreach through the local Women, Infants, and Children office, the Barnstable County Council for Children, Youth and Families, Barnstable County Human Services, and several faith-based organizations. The children participating in the project received child friendly, wholesome, fresh, appealing meals each day (breakfast and lunch). This program reached target households in the County with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (formerly Food Stamps) and no access to an area eligible meal service location. In 2010-11, the program served a maximum of 124 to a minimum of 110 children throughout the summer, as reported by the outreach coordinators.

Table 4 (below) shows that there was an increase in federal reimbursement for the summer Food Service Program for FY11, in comparison with FY10, by 2.9%. The total reimbursement in FY11 was $6,616,258 while the total in FY10 was $6,426,928. In addition, the reimbursement has steadily increased over the past five years as the participation by children has increased as described previously.

| Table 4: Federal Reimbursement for Summer Food Service Programs from Fiscal Years 2007 to 2011\textsuperscript{7} |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fiscal Year     | FY2007          | FY2008          | FY2009          | FY2010          | FY2011          |
| Federal         | $5134,141       | $5,924,438      | $6,031,045      | $6,426,928      | $6,616,258      |

\textsuperscript{6}Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Nutrition, Health, and Safety Programs, 2011

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Part V – Conclusion

During Fiscal Year 2011, under the direction of the Department’s Office for Nutrition, Health and Safety Programs, the child nutrition outreach program coordinators at Project Bread worked diligently and tirelessly with school district staff and community organizations to expand and enhance the effectiveness of current programs and to introduce new campaign strategies and resources to address childhood hunger in Massachusetts. In addition to recognizing the benefits of the school breakfast and summer food service program as nutritional support for families in the Commonwealth, the Department’s continued monitoring of economic trends and meal eligibility levels provided it with the opportunity to forecast need in all cities and towns. Despite the difficult economic status in many communities that challenged program sponsorship, collaborative activities with the coordination of resources sustained program participation.

Outreach coordinators increased their campaigns to inform schools, students, and parents about the State Universal School Breakfast Program initiative and Summer Food Service Program opportunities. They have tapped human resources that are eager and capable of testing innovative ways of preparing and presenting meals that are receptive by many students. These resources have provided districts with tools to improve, promote, and strengthen breakfast programs.

Outreach coordinators provided program support in specific areas of management and operations that encompass budgets, menu offerings, and nutritional content. Increased student input and participation in the promotion of the breakfast programs have addressed misconceptions on food quality and availability. The provision of opportunities for programs to share their successful models and to discuss alternative ways to reach all eligible children has improved and strengthened programs in all regions of the Commonwealth.

The connection between community-based activities and the comprehensive operation of summer sites largely determine the success of summer sites. Additional federal resources have been triggered by continual streamlined program reimbursement. Massachusetts received an increase in federal reimbursement from $35.7 million in Fiscal Year 2010 to $36.8 million in Fiscal Year 2011. Incorporating marketing, food presentation, locally grown produce, and enhanced nutrient standards, improved overall food service operation and encouraged sustained participation.

Nutrition education information and knowledge have been integrated into the summer day. The provision of grant funds to hire outreach coordinators for local programs provided an increase in sites, and targeted marketing campaigns. It has expanded community involvement in the Summer Food Service Program also. The availability of additional grant opportunities from various entities for these programs has allowed for the development of more effective strategies to improve nutrition programs, outreach, and accessibility.

The Commonwealth’s support of these programs contributed greatly to the ability to reach and serve hungry children across the state in this increasingly strained economic climate.