

IMPACT



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Students Learn To Be Their Best with Breakfast

The Situation

Breakfast is considered to be the most important meal of the day. Studies from around the United States have shown:

- **Kids who eat breakfast seem to have an easier time learning than kids who do not eat breakfast.** Breakfast eaters are able to concentrate on learning, make fewer errors, score higher on tests, are more creative, and work faster.
- **Kids who eat breakfast behave better in school than hungry kids.** Breakfast eaters cause fewer fights, are more cooperative, are less likely to be sent to the principal's office for discipline problems, and get along better with classmates.
- **Kids who eat breakfast are more likely to be in school than non-breakfast eaters.** Breakfast eaters are less likely to be absent, less likely to be late, and less likely to go to the sickroom with a stomachache or headache. (Breakfast Boosts Brain Power, National Dairy Council, 2003.)

Our Response

In order to share the importance of eating breakfast, this University of Idaho extension educator developed and presented "Be Your Best with Breakfast" to kindergarten- and elementary-age children in Bingham County and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. During the 2005-2006 school year, students from seven local schools participated in this program. Two elementary schools and a kindergarten center participated in a University of Idaho nutrition school-enrichment program for the

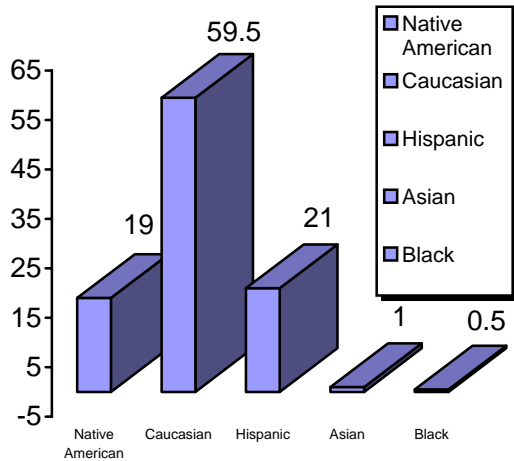
first time this year. In "Be Your Best with Breakfast," students learned and did the following:

- Learned that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, as children eat for the first time after nine to twelve hours of rest.
- Discussed reasons to eat breakfast.
- Brainstormed breakfast ideas, including non-traditional foods.
- Learned that a complete breakfast includes foods from at least three food groups.
- Examined several sample breakfasts for completeness.

Throughout the program students were encouraged to eat breakfast daily, either at home or at a school-sponsored breakfast program, and to eat a variety of foods from each food group each day.

Kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade students also heard one or two children's literature books illustrating the importance of breakfast. In *The Hatseller and the Monkeys*, the main character cannot think clearly until he eats breakfast. *Good Morning Little Fox*, tells the story of a young fox that is hesitant to try a new breakfast food, but finds he likes it when he tries it. Both the students and the teachers commented that the addition of these books enhanced the learning process.

Seventy-nine sessions of "Be Your Best with Breakfast" were taught to a total of 1,665 students this school year. Fifty-one percent of the children were male, and forty-nine percent were female. The participants came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, as noted on the chart.



Program Outcomes

Third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students were given a questionnaire before the program and immediately after the program. Results of the survey include the following:

Question (N=607)	% correct before class	% correct after class
What is the most important meal of the day?	89	92
How many days a week should you eat breakfast?	96	96
How many days a week do (will) you eat breakfast?	80	89
What kind of food could you eat for breakfast?	34	79

The largest increase in knowledge was on the last question. Students were given a list of both traditional and non-traditional breakfast items and asked which could be eaten for breakfast. They were advised that they could choose more than one. The foods were cereal, eggs and toast, pancakes/waffles, pizza, soup, and a peanut butter sandwich. Choosing four or more of the items was considered a correct answer.

The Future

School enrichment nutrition education programs will continue to be taught in area elementary schools. The topics are taught on a six-year cycle so that students will participate in a different class in each of their elementary school years.

For More Information

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