

Evaluation of Child Nutrition Programs Related to Program Delivery and Implementation

Government of New Brunswick. (2000a). Healthy minds breakfast pilot program evaluation October 1999-March 2000. Policy and Planning, New Brunswick Education. Retrieved February 24, 2002, from <http://www.gnb.ca/000/publications/polplan/breakfast/breakfast.thm>

Name of program: Healthy Minds Breakfast Pilot Program

Program goals: To provide a basic breakfast to all hungry students in kindergarten to Grade 5.

Where: School District 8 (Saint John) and School District 9 (Tracadie-Sheila) in New Brunswick

Location of programs (school, community centre): 52 schools


Purpose of evaluation: To identify successes and challenges encountered in the pilot period for the Healthy Minds Breakfast Program Pilot and to identify where improvements are necessary, distinguishing between urban and rural needs.

Evaluation objective(s): To assess the level of participation and to identify factors influencing program participation, operational issues affecting programs, major challenges to programs, partnerships, and assess the impact of partnerships on programs.

Evaluation methods: The evaluation consisted of three components: 1) collecting quantitative data on the number of participants, volunteers and food selection per month; 2) two questionnaires designed to capture qualitative data on community relationships, donations, and operating logistics, such as food storage, food preparation, and cleanup, perceptions of programs and suggestions for improvements; and 3) interview sessions with principals aimed at obtaining level of satisfaction with the pilot project and gain their suggestions for sustainability and future expansion of the breakfast program.

Results:

Access and participation. The total number of participants overall was 10,474 in universal breakfast programs (including morning snack). The average rate of participation in Saint John was 17.5% and in Tracadie-Sheila was 9.1%. Programs operated daily. Participation was influenced by cold weather; awareness of breakfast program at the school; poverty; an inviting atmosphere; parental attitudes (not wanting to be viewed negatively by others because their child receives a handout); permission slips and having to raise hands in class to participate (deterrents). Programs with the highest attendance attributed this to respect shown to or by students. Integrating breakfast into classroom time and having student contribute a snack to a community snack bowl were used as less stigmatizing strategies. All children from



kindergarten to Grade 5 were invited to participate. Notices were sent home to parents, announcements were made at school, teachers informing students and parents about the program.

Parental involvement, consent, partnerships, and collaboration. Consent not mentioned. Parents participated as volunteers and on the School Parent Advisory Committees.

Inclusive and efficient program management. District 9 depends on paid cafeteria staff to organize programs. Volunteers purchased food, transported supplies, planned, set up, delivered, and cleaned up for program. Principals, teachers, and volunteers were relied upon in smaller schools. Parents and community members also volunteered for programs. Program partnerships consisted of school administration, teachers, parents, and organizations such as the Legion, community police, churches, Saint John Milk Fund, Catholic Women's League, Woodstock Food Banks, Caisse Populaire, the Co-op, Fredericton – Boys & Girls Club, Canadian Living Foundation and IODE. Yet respondents mentioned that finding daily volunteers was a challenge.


Food quality. Successful programs used provincial criteria for food safety, nutrition requirements, and program accessibility but with local input for program design. Respondents said breakfast menus were nutritious and easy to serve. District 8 principals stated pre-packaged foods were the most convenient, such as yogurt tubes. The Department of Health and Community Services Public Health Nutritionists provide assistance with menu planning and food safety tips.

Financial accountability. Daily food cost per student was of \$0.87. In 50% of schools, teachers ordered food with their usual food orders; in 10% bulk purchases; 68% purchased bulk from local wholesalers or local grocery store, particularly those that delivered food. Rural schools had higher food costs due to the lack of access to suppliers. Buying locally helped to establish local community support.

Safety: In District 9, 90% of meals are served in the cafeteria and 10% in classrooms. In District 8, 19% of meals are served in the gym, 3% in the cafeteria, 30% in classrooms, 16% in the kitchen / lunch room, 6% in the library, and 26% in other places. The Department of Education's Community Use of Schools Policy encourages exchange of service facilitating community groups' use of school facilities.

Impact of school meals on students. Principals reported that student behaviour and attention improved.

Stigmatization. Unintended labelling of students was a source of unease for some parents. Parents' fear being labelled as inadequate and pride were reasons some parents did not send their children to programs. Respondents indicated that the public perceived programs as a waste of public resources. Some parents perceived the breakfast program as threatening their parental responsibility.



Government of New Brunswick. (2000a). Healthy minds breakfast pilot program evaluation October 1999-March 2000. Policy and Planning, New Brunswick Education. P.96-97. Retrieved September 27, 2011, from http://www.childnutritioncouncil.com/best_practices_review0305.pdf