

DR. HAZEL LOUCKS: Good morning. As you can see, in this session we're going to talk about breakfast in the classroom and how you, as food service professionals, can be a part of the program and be a partner. So we want to talk about breakfast in the classroom and also universal breakfast, and what you need to know about that to be a partner and how it might affect your job. Recent studies have shown that, for a fact, 22% of all children in the United States, especially those from poverty, come to school with an empty stomach. That's pretty disturbing news to many of us. In response to those studies, schools have begun to think about, how can we provide food for our students? And breakfast in the classroom is one of those ways.

A 2008 study at Harvard called the Impact of School Breakfast on Children's Health and Learning revealed that eating breakfast has numerous benefits, some beyond anything that we ever knew. In fact, they said that students have trouble learning when they are hungry. And so, especially at school, we have an opportunity to provide students with a nourishing breakfast.

Almost one in four children live in households where families face a constant struggle to provide food, and so we need to think seriously about what are we doing about that? And as more and more families struggle financially in the United States, we also need to know what can be a reliable source of food. And school is one of those places where they can get food.

Children come from all types of home situations. We know there are dysfunctional families. We know that there are families who don't understand the importance of breakfast. We know that there are families that have -- just don't take the time to fix breakfast because they don't understand how important it is. So we need to figure out, how can we inform families and if they -- about the importance of breakfast? And then how can the school take the responsibility for helping them get a nutritious breakfast? Some of the things that we need to think about is that parents have work schedules that keep them from fixing breakfast before their children leave for school. There are social issues for our kids when they come to school. After 6th grade, they'd rather visit than eat breakfast. And so we need to think about if they know the importance of a healthy breakfast, then we can help them take part in a healthy breakfast program.

Children -- less than half of the eligible low-income children eat breakfast at school, and the reasons are varied, just as I mentioned before. The reason they don't eat breakfast is because they'd rather socialize or because the stigma attached. Some schools have serious stigma because of the way low-income children have to enroll in the breakfast free program. So

we need to think about, what can we do so that all the eligible children take part in breakfast? And breakfast in the classroom is one of those ways. A comprehensive literature review of 22 different studies provides evidence that linking schools' breakfast and academic success is really very important. And that study showed that students who had a nutritious breakfast did as much as one grade higher in mathematics than those who did not have a healthy breakfast. So think about how powerful that finding is and how schools can make a real difference in children's academic success just by serving breakfast.

So we need to think about that as also in regard to obesity. Our national statistics on obesity are startling, and so we find that -- research studies indicate that students who have adequate nutrition and eat nutritious breakfasts on a regular basis are more likely to have a reduced risk of being overweight. More than two-thirds of America's children under the age of 19 are overweight and obese. This study was done by the Center of Disease Control, and also a study done by the National Association of State Boards of Education. And also 31.9% of children are overweight. So when you take that 16.3% and that 19%, you see a huge number of our children are in danger of being obese and suffering from all the things that happen as a result of obesity. Obesity has caused cardiovascular disease as well as psycho-social problems and other ailments. And also studies show that obese children do not do as well academically.

Encouraging healthy eating habits in students take awareness and cooperation from all school personnel and parents. Studies show that adding universal breakfast in the classroom programs have been shown to increase school breakfast participation as much as 90%, and that's huge. So I say, why is breakfast in the classroom important? Research reveals that nutritious breakfast not only helps students do better academically, but also it helps avoid some serious negative effects such as depression and anxiety, which have a huge effect on learning. Eating breakfast can help students make better connections to learning, and not eating breakfast can actually affect their emotional wellbeing.

So how can you be sure that all kids are getting a nutritional breakfast at school? And breakfast in the classroom is one way to make sure that all children are getting breakfast free-of-charge and that they get at least one nutritious meal each day. All students eat free breakfast in the classroom. This is how the program works, so understand everybody eats free. There are federal funds which can support the program, and you can easily find out from your federal funding sources about how you access those funds. It eliminates the barriers which currently many children face from traditional breakfast programs. Many free and reduced kids go to the

cafeteria. As a result, they are identified as being low-income or poverty and that causes a stigma issue. And it especially becomes more difficult after 6th grade. And we also know that if it's free breakfast for everyone, it increases participation because it happens in the classroom, and it can increase academic achievement and improve the school learning environment for everyone.

So when everyone has breakfast, again, the stigma is being unable to afford breakfast, is gone. And the bus schedule and time constraints which may prohibit eating breakfast are removed because it doesn't matter what time the bus arrives. You still are going to have breakfast in your classroom all at the same time. And the barriers of being identified, regardless of their circumstances, are also removed.

Research is powerful regarding the benefits of eating breakfast and how it impacts memory function. So students perform better academically when they have had breakfast, they pay better attention in class, and it increases their memory function. They behave better. That ought to be on everybody's good list because it has been shown to improve behavior. And also it has reduced absences and tardies as well as reduction in health problems. So nurses report that schools that have breakfast in the classroom have fewer health problems during the day, which is an interesting statistic.

Providing nutritious meals at school is partly your responsibility. As a food service worker, you know that you are in the business of providing healthy and appealing meals to students. And this is no small task. It involves careful planning on your part, as well as following strict government guidelines and utilizing the many commodities that are available to you as a school service employee.

So breakfast in the classroom is a different way of thinking, and it also may have some effect on your job. It may require some changes in how you do things to make it run smoothly. So we want to talk about that a little bit. How might it affect your job? It has to begin with the development of procedures. All the people have to be involved. Administrators have to be involved. Teachers have to be involved because it is going to change what they do in their classroom. Parent educators have to be involved because they are in the classroom. Custodians have to be involved because it may change their work. And then you want to get the community behind it so that everyone understands, why are you doing this, what are you doing that's different, and how it might affect my child. It involves the cooperation of all school personnel,

and it involves the contributions of many. It may change how you do your work, it may increase your workload at some point, and it may reduce your workload at some point.

Breakfast in the classroom requires a systemic change that must fit into the school's culture, style, and resources. When student learning becomes the priority of the school, all personal barriers to implementing the program become much more reasonable and manageable. You know what your job requires and you know a few of the tasks that we've mentioned. Students' nutrition managers and staff have a large role in this effort, and you know, you plan menus, you order the food, you purchase the products, you prepare the meals, you manage the cost, and you would need to promote the program. So we need to think about, how is this going to change your job?

You need to know what kind of food -- how are you going to change your food? For instance, we've had food service workers say to us, you know, we need to think about what kinds of foods can we serve in the classroom that are not going to be as messy as some other foods? So if I want to serve a muffin, I need to think about what kind of mess those muffins are going to do. Or if I want to do a breakfast sandwich, what kind of breakfast sandwich can we provide in the classroom that's nutritious, but also will not cause a big mess? So we need to think about food service delivery methods. That will change. And how are we going to package the foods in a reasonable way? And then how is it going to change preparation time? So those are all issues which have to be dealt with.

Studies have shown over and over again that eating breakfast makes a difference, that there are many competitive foods, we call it junk food or á la carte or whatever you want it. There are many competitive foods that provide a constant appeal to students. So helping them think about eating a nutritious breakfast also takes some education on the school's part. We also know that there are many programs that, in some areas where there's high poverty, that students have to have -- their meals at school are the only meals they get for the week, and the weekend is without food. So there are schools that are doing backpack weekends and other programs that have been established to help provide students with meals while they are at home over the weekend. Breakfast in the classroom is part of an overall thinking process about, how are we going to make sure that students are getting high-quality food on a regular basis, especially those youth who are not having access to food from their home?

What food service workers need to know. You need to know about the benefits of the program. Why would you have this program at all? And you need to know about preparation methods and process. How will it change your work? Think about point of service accountability, different equipment and storage needs. We know that sometimes breakfast in the classroom delivery method alone requires changing how we're going to deliver the food to the classroom, how we're going to clean up the messes afterwards. And then you need to think about, how are we going to get to a break even point? Because schools are not going to implement this program if it's not cost-effective.

So the menu choices, many schools have looked at the menu choices and they look at easy to eat items such as low-fat muffins or fruit plus milk plus yogurt, healthy choices. And so those are things that have happened in other schools: grab and go, hallway chaos, cafeteria or classroom delivery. The method of delivery is not as important as having the program.

So what can you do to get the ball rolling? First of all, you can encourage non-traditional breakfast dining options. And you know what will work. You can talk to people who already have breakfast in the classroom programs and you can be the person who really is the initiator, getting your administration and your parents and the other people in your school to think about what could this do for our students.

Also, making food appealing and attractive for students is really important. Students need to understand good nutrition, but we also know they're not going to eat something that doesn't look good or that doesn't fit into their thinking about what is good food. So you need to promote good nutrition every day. You need to encourage your district to look at alternative ways to get kids to have a healthy start with no stigma attached. And so you're in the business of promoting healthy students, and you're in the business of providing nutritious food every day to your students.

So my last question is, why you? And the goal of breakfast in the classroom is to see that every child, regardless of their circumstances, starts with a healthy breakfast. And that's your job. You, as a food service professional, have been involved in providing nutritious meals to students, but now this increases your role to think about, how can we make sure that every child has breakfast every day, has a nutritious start to their day? And I have hope -- I hope I have encouraged you to understand that it's really important for them to have a nutritious breakfast

in order to have academic success, as well as decrease in tardinesses and absences, as well as reduction in health problems, and also the issue about childhood obesity.

So think about how you could be a partner in this process. The NEA has resources for you. The ESP Department and the HIN Department each have resources that you can access by simply making that request. Many of the things I've talked to you about today came from HIN, and so you can have something that they have put together called a toolkit, which might be a great help to you in getting this program started. So we would like to encourage you to think about, how can you increase the opportunity for your school to take part in breakfast in the classroom? And thinking about how you can get access to funds, your federal government has provided funds for this program, and many, many schools are not taking advantage. But we also hope to give you places where you can give them a call to say, how did you get it going? How is it working for you? Those are the things we'd like to provide for you.

So we would like for you to be a partner in this program. We'd like for you to have school success. So think about how can you be a part of this success. It's a win-win for all students. Thank you very much.