



November 1, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam  
Governor of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building, Third Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Janet D. Howell  
Chair, Senate Finance and  
Appropriations Committee  
Virginia General Assembly  
P.O. Box 2608  
Reston, VA 20195-0608

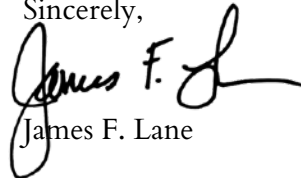
The Honorable Luke E. Torian  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
Virginia General Assembly  
4222 Fortuna Plaza, Suite 659  
Dumfries, Virginia 22025

**Dear Sirs and Madam:**

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the alternative breakfast service model program from the 2020-2021 school year, as required by *Item 136 C.30.c.1-3, Chapter 552, 2020 Acts of Assembly*. In total, 512 schools within 66 school divisions participated in the program in 2020-2021. Participating schools are required to evaluate the educational impact of the program; however, the Virginia Department of Education waived certain reporting requirements for the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you need additional information, please contact Kent C. Dickey, Deputy Superintendent of Budget, Finance, and Operations, at (804) 225-2025 or [kent.dickey@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:kent.dickey@doe.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,



James F. Lane

JFL/JPR  
Enclosure

c: The Honorable Atif Qarni,  
Secretary of Education



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Report

# Report on Alternative School Breakfast Service Models

Presented to:

**The Governor of Virginia**

**House Appropriations Committee**

**Senate Finance and Appropriations  
Committee**

**November 1, 2021**

*Virginia Department of Education*

*P. O. Box 2120*

*Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120*

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### AUTHORITY FOR THE STUDY

*Chapter 1289* of the 2020 Acts of Assembly allotted funds to support schools that provide breakfast meals to eligible students through an alternative breakfast service model, commonly called breakfast after the bell. For this appropriation, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is required to collect data from participating schools to evaluate the educational impact of the program and report the results to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Superintendent of Public Instruction waived most school division reporting requirements for alternative breakfast service models for the 2020-2021 school year.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The *Chapter 1289* budget provided \$1.074 million in state funds for the operation of alternative school breakfast service models implemented in the 2020-2021 school year. To receive funds, schools must have at least 45 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. Similar to 2019-2020, the state reimbursed five cents (\$0.05) in elementary schools and ten cents (\$0.10) in secondary schools per reimbursable meal served (see Appendix A for language from the *Chapter 1289* budget).

Generally, alternative school breakfast service models provide meals to students through a distribution method different from traditional cafeteria service. The most effective alternative breakfast models allow students to eat their meal after the official start of school day, commonly known as “breakfast after the bell.” These models may include breakfast in the classroom, grab and go breakfast, or breakfast after first period. Implementing breakfast after the bell and other alternative models have been shown to

significantly increase student participation and decrease stigma often associated with school breakfast participation.

In March 2020, as a result of the pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allowed schools to transition from the traditional school breakfast program to the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option. This, along with federal program waivers, allowed schools to serve breakfast (and other meals) outside of the traditional school setting and available to all students independent of student eligibility to receive school meals.

Wide variation in the availability of in-person instruction during the 2020-2021 school year and flexibilities in federal requirements allowed school divisions to tailor the methods by which they distributed breakfast meals to students. Examples of the ways in which school divisions distributed breakfast meals include bus delivery to homes, bulk grab and go, and parent or guardian pick up of meals.

## **WAIVED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DUE TO COVID-19**

In May of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued and the Secretary of Education approved an emergency relief measure that waived certain school division reporting requirements for the alternative breakfast service program. This waiver was in accordance with Chapters 1283 and 1289 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly providing the Superintendent of Public Instruction the authority to grant temporary flexibility or waivers for certain deadlines and requirements as provided in the Title 22.1 of the *Code of Virginia* and Appropriation Act that cannot be met for fiscal year 2020 (school year 2019-2020) or fiscal year 2021 (school year 2020-2021) due to the state of emergency and subsequent school closures. Waived reporting requirements included tardy arrivals; office discipline referrals; student achievement measures; teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation; and the financial impact on the division's school food program in its annual program report.

Due to the waived reporting requirements, this report on alternative breakfast models for the 2020-2021 school year is limited to data on the number of eligible breakfast meals served. Flexibilities in program implementation resulted in widely varying methods for distributing breakfast meals, making comparisons to previous years unhelpful for understanding program success. The results of previous evaluations are featured in Appendix B, for reference.

## **PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

For the 2020-2021 school year, 512 schools within 65 school divisions received funding. Of the 512 participating schools, 313 schools were elementary schools and 199 schools were secondary schools or centers.

## **BREAKFAST MEALS SERVED**

The 512 schools participating in the alternative school breakfast program provided 13,225,903 breakfast meals to students during the 2020-2021 school year. Of those, 7,531,676 meals were provided by elementary schools and 5,694,227 meals were provided by secondary schools (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Eligible Breakfast Meals Served by School Type, 2020-2021 School Year*

<u>School Type</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>	<u>Total Meals Served</u>
Elementary	313	7,531,676
Middle/High	199	5,694,227
Total	512	13,225,903

Due to the change from the traditional school breakfast program to the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option, comparison of meals served to previous school year will not provide a meaningful analysis of the program's year-to-year growth. While the varying methods for distributing breakfast meals make comparisons to previous years unhelpful, the flexibilities in program implementation allowed divisions to change their delivery models to meet the needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **SUMMARY**

In March 2020, as a result of the pandemic, the USDA allowed schools to transition from the traditional school breakfast program to the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option. This, along with federal program waivers, allowed schools to serve breakfast (and other meals) outside of the traditional school setting and available to all students independent of student eligibility to receive school meals. This flexibility in program implementation resulted in varying methods for distribution of breakfast meals to meet the needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, due to the waived reporting requirements, this report on alternative breakfast models for the 2020-2021 school year is limited to data on the number of eligible breakfast meals served. The change from traditional school breakfast program to a Summer Food Service Program or Seamless

Summer Option improved the ability of school divisions to meet the needs of their students and families. However, this flexibility limits the value of conducting comparative analysis of program data.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

*Item 145 C.29.c.1-3, Chapter 1289, 2020 Acts of Assembly:*

c.1) Out of this appropriation, \$1,074,000 the first year and \$1,074,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to fund an After-the-Bell Model breakfast program available on a voluntary basis to elementary, middle, and high schools where student eligibility for free or reduced lunch exceeds 45.0 percent for the participating eligible school, and to provide additional reimbursement for eligible meals served in the current traditional school breakfast program at all grade levels in any participating school. The Department of Education is directed to ensure that only eligible schools receive reimbursement funding for participating in the After-the-Bell school breakfast model. The schools participating in the program shall evaluate the educational impact of the models implemented that provide school breakfasts to students after the first bell of the school day, based on the guidelines developed by the Department of Education and submit the required report to the Department of Education no later than August 31 each year.

2) The Department of Education shall communicate, through Superintendent's Memo, to school divisions the types of breakfast serving models and the criteria that will meet the requirements for this State reimbursement, which may include, but are not limited to, breakfast in the classroom, grab and go breakfast, or a breakfast after first period. School divisions may determine the breakfast serving model that best applies to its students, so long as it occurs after the instructional day has begun. The Department of Education shall monthly transfer to each school division a reimbursement rate of \$0.05 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in elementary schools and a reimbursement rate of \$0.10 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in middle or high schools.

3) No later than July 1 each year, the Department of Education shall provide for a breakfast program application process for school divisions with eligible schools, including guidelines regarding specified required data to be compiled from the prior school year or years and for the upcoming school year program. The number of approved applications shall be based on the estimated number of sites that can be accommodated within the approved funding level. The Department of Education shall set criteria for establishing priority should the number of applications from eligible schools exceed the approved funding level. The reporting requirements must include: chronic absenteeism rates, student attendance and tardy

arrivals, office discipline referrals, student achievement measures, teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation, and the financial impact on the division's school food program. Funded schools that do not provide data by August 31 are subject to exclusion from funding in the following year. The Department of Education shall collect and compile the results of the breakfast program and shall submit the report to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees no later than November 1 following each school year.



## Appendix B

### **Fiscal Year 2016 Study**

In July 2015, VDOE released Superintendent's Memo #172-15 announcing the first year of applications for an alternative school breakfast service pilot or expansion of traditional breakfast service model supported by \$537,297 in state funds. For the 2015-2016 school year, 226 schools within 52 divisions received funding for alternative breakfast. Seventeen additional schools were selected to expand their traditional school breakfast programs.

Participating schools provided an additional 1,266,555 meals to students during the pilot year, a 13.6 percent increase from the previous year. School staff reported few challenges during implementation of the alternative school breakfast program, and the implementation costs for most schools were minimal. In addition, 54 percent of participating schools showed an increase in breakfast meals served in conjunction with an increase in one or both state standards of learning (SOL) assessment pass rates in reading or math.

### **Fiscal Year 2017 Study**

In fiscal year 2017, \$1,074,000 in state funds were available through a competitive application process to support implementation of alternative breakfast service models or expand traditional breakfast service. More than 750 schools applied for funds, and 463 schools across 84 divisions were selected to receive funding.

Schools participating in the 2016-2017 school year provided an additional 1,435,256 breakfast meals to students compared to the 2015-2016 school year, and an additional 3,159,846 breakfast meals to students compared to the 2014-2015 school year. This represents nearly a 19 percent increase in breakfast meals served since state funds were available. School-level outcome metrics showed small but statistically significant decreases in attendance and increases in school nurse visits. Most schools that received two years of funding showed greater growth in meals served and pass rates on state assessments in the first year of implementation and were able to maintain those gains through the second year.

### **Fiscal Year 2018 Study**

The 2018 Appropriation Act provided \$1.1 million in state funds for the operation of breakfast after the bell programs in fiscal year 2018 in eligible schools. Seven hundred sixty-four schools applied for

funding and 450 schools across 83 school divisions were selected to receive funding in school year 2017-2018.

Schools implementing alternative breakfast service models in the 2017-2018 school year saw an increase in the number of breakfast meals served per student and reported a decrease in student hunger in the morning. The majority of schools examined for fiscal impact demonstrated decreased meals costs after implementation, indicating a more efficient use of staff and resources.

### **Fiscal Year 2019 Study**

The 2019 Appropriation Act provided \$1.074 million in state funds for the operation of alternative school breakfast service models implemented in the 2018-2019 school year. Three hundred twenty-five schools within 66 school divisions were selected to receive funding. Of the 325 participating schools, 179 schools were elementary schools and 146 schools were secondary schools or centers. In addition, 170 of the 325 participating schools received state funding for alternative breakfast service models for the first time in 2018-2019 and 155 schools received state funding previously.

Schools receiving state funding for alternative breakfast programs increased the average number of breakfast meals served per student in the first year of implementation by eight percent. Schools receiving multiple years of state funding were able to sustain increases in meals served over time. Survey data indicated division and school staff were satisfied with the alternative school breakfast models implemented in their schools and perceived positive impacts on student hunger and the stigma associated with school breakfast program participation. Program impacts on self-reported student tardiness and office discipline referrals were mixed, but participating schools showed promising improvements in chronic absenteeism and student achievement. VDOE also found that the cost per breakfast meal served decreased in most schools following the implementation of the alternative breakfast program, offsetting additional food and equipment costs, and indicating a more efficient use of program staff and resources.

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Study**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor of Virginia closed schools statewide March 13, 2020, and schools remained closed through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. In May of 2020, the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued and the Secretary of Education approved an emergency relief measure that waived certain school division reporting requirements for the alternative breakfast service program. This waiver was in accordance with Chapters 1283 and 1289 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly providing the Superintendent of Public Instruction the authority to grant temporary flexibility or waivers

for certain deadlines and requirements as provided in the Title 22.1 of the Code of Virginia and Appropriation Act that cannot be met for fiscal year 2020 (school year 2019-2020) or fiscal year 2021 (school year 2020-2021) due to the state of emergency and subsequent school closures. Waived reporting requirements included tardy arrivals; office discipline referrals; student achievement measures; teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation; and the financial impact on the division's school food program in its annual program report.

Due to the waived reporting requirements, this report on alternative breakfast models for the 2019-2020 school year is limited to data on number of eligible breakfast meals served, which were collected from August 2020 through April 2021. The truncated 2019-2020 school year does not permit comparisons to previous, complete years of school nutrition program data.