

Lt. Governor Guadagno Champions School Breakfast With Visit to Herbert Hoover Middle School

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Trenton, NJ – Highlighting the State's increased participation in the School Breakfast Program, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today visited two classes at Herbert Hoover Middle School in Edison Township to see the program's benefits. Led by Herbert Hoover Middle School Principal Brian McGrath, Lt. Governor Guadagno and Agriculture Secretary Douglas H. Fisher visited a 6th grade homeroom for breakfast and spoke to an 8th grade health class.

"The facts speak for themselves – well-fed students are healthier, miss fewer days of school, and are better able to focus on their work," said Lt. Governor Guadagno "I'm proud of the State's efforts, which have increased student participation by 42% since 2009, and was pleased to see the benefits of the program in person here in Edison Township."

The School Breakfast Program, funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), traditionally provided meals before the beginning of the school day. In a collaborative effort to provide greater access to healthy breakfasts, the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture and Education sent a joint letter in January of 2012 encouraging every school in the state to provide breakfast in the classroom – "Breakfast After the Bell" – and allow the time spent to be considered part of instructional time. Through changing the method of delivering breakfast, schools have seen an increase in students participating in the program.

"The New Jersey Department of Agriculture has been working with school districts to offer breakfast in the classroom once the school day has started by offering trainings, networking opportunities and support," said Secretary Fisher. "We have made tremendous progress over the last few years in increasing the number of students throughout the state who have access to breakfast."

Prior to this policy change, the Food Research and Action Center, a national nonprofit organization that works to eradicate hunger in the U.S., ranked New Jersey near the bottom of all states in participation in the program. This year, the state jumped to 37th in the nation and was among only nine states to have a 5% or higher increase in participation in this year. Currently, about 255,000 children eat school breakfast on a daily basis, with more than 196,000 receiving free breakfast.

Edison Township Public Schools is a leader in the program with 58% of the district's 3,200 low-income students receiving a healthy morning meal. Before the district began serving breakfast in the classroom in 2011, just 1% of low-income students were participating. The district now offers classroom breakfast to all students. A paying student is offered optional classroom breakfast at the regular cost of \$1.00 per breakfast per day.

Lt. Governor Guadagno was joined on her visit by, among others, Edison Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard O'Malley, Executive County Superintendent Todd Flora, State Board of Education member Arcelio Aponte and USDA Food and Nutrition Service Mid-Atlantic Region Special Nutrition Programs Director James Harmon.

More information on the program can be found on the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's website at: http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school_breakfast.html

Photos from today's visit are available at: <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/media/photos/2014/20140929a.shtml>

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