



**DISTRICT:**

Midland ISD, Midland, Texas

**FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR:**

Patricia Mouser

**ALTERNATE BREAKFAST SERVICE:**

Complimentary Breakfast in the Classroom

## ★ **BACKGROUND**

There were several reasons Patricia Mouser decided to try providing complimentary breakfast to students and serve it in the classroom. Buses couldn't get students to school early enough to eat breakfast, attendance at breakfast was low, resulting in decreased income for high free and reduced schools, and students were missing a key opportunity to improve their nutrition when skipping breakfast.

In 1998 Mouser began a pilot program in five schools, feeding all students complimentary Breakfast in the Classroom. The pilot was so successful that in the past four years serving Breakfast in the Classroom has increased to 26 campuses—all on a voluntary basis.

## ★ **IMPLEMENTATION**

Using the pilot as the model, negatives like lost instructional time and mess from the foods were proven to be "non-issues." So, Mouser had the help of the best advocates of the program she could find—the teachers! "It was the teachers' word-of-mouth about the program that has given it the momentum to grow," explains Mouser. "They have been our most successful allies."

Mouser is able to provide complimentary breakfast by using the funds that come from the free and reduced reimbursement received from USDA. While many schools need this rate to be near 80%, Mouser can work with rates of 50% by keeping food and labor costs at 60-65 cents per meal. The menu is simple, featuring a one-week cycle menu with hand-held foods like pocket sandwiches, jumbo muffins and cinnamon rolls. While the delivery of food to the classrooms varies a little with each location, in most cases food is delivered on small carts with meals packed into plastic tubs.

## ★ **IMPACT**

"For those campuses serving Breakfast in the Classroom, participation has gone from serving 30% to 80% of the enrollment," Mouser reports. "Students have benefited nutritionally and academically. Teachers report the children are more productive, ready to learn and less disruptive. After seeing the improvements in students' productivity and attentiveness as a result of eating breakfast, teachers encourage students to eat at school and the meal count reflects it."

## ★ **WORDS OF ADVICE**

According to Mouser, "Communication is the key to a successful complimentary Breakfast in the Classroom program. You have to keep the faculty and the parents informed every step of the way."