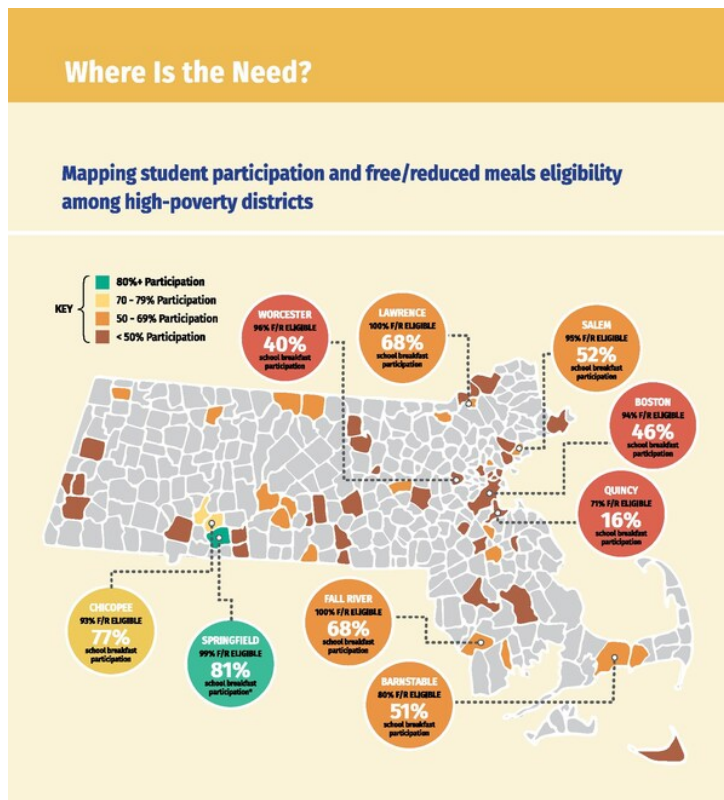


Report shows drop in proportion of students receiving free breakfast at schools

14 June 2024 | News

New Eos Foundation study finds that when breakfast is offered in the classroom, and after the start of the school day, participation rates often double



School breakfast participation data as of October 2023.

* Springfield's participation was 81% in October 2023. The district self-reported a participation increase to 85% in the month of April 2024 which is referenced throughout this report.

New Eos Foundation study finds that when breakfast is offered in the classroom, and after the start of the school day, participation rates often double

Newly released data from the Eos Foundation revealed that only 48 per cent of students enrolled in the Commonwealth's 813 high-poverty K-12 schools are receiving the free breakfast to which they are entitled, down from the high-water mark of 58 per cent during the 2019/20 school year.

According to Eos' 2023/24 school breakfast report card, Ending Hunger in Our Classrooms: Expanding After the Bell Breakfast to Fuel Student Learning, the decline in participation is largely explained by the drop in the number of schools serving breakfast after-the-bell and in the classroom. Most schools serve breakfast in the cafeteria before classes begin,

making it difficult for some students to access.

Participation rates would jump if schools switched to the after-the-bell model, which could increase breakfast participation rates up to 80 per cent or more. For example, Springfield Public Schools provides breakfast after the bell and in the classroom to 85 per cent of students each day, including those in high schools.

"Universal free breakfast, after the bell and in the classroom, is the single greatest opportunity to reduce child hunger in our state, removing the stigma and encouraging all students to break bread together," said Andrea Silbert, President of the Eos Foundation. "It results in higher academic achievement, fewer nurse visits, better nutrition, and increased funding for school nutrition department budgets."

The report found that if all 813 of the state's high-poverty schools reached 80 per cent of their students with free breakfast, 150,000 more young people would eat school breakfast each day, and collectively, these schools would receive an additional \$67 million in federal U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reimbursements, which is currently being forfeited.