

Nourishing Kids Initiative

Supporting Universal Free, Breakfast after the Bell and in the Classroom (BIC) in 50 Schools in Massachusetts to over 21,000 children

The Eos Foundation is a private philanthropic foundation committed to breaking the cycle of poverty by investing in children's futures. The goal of our Nourishing Kids Initiative (NKI) is to combat childhood hunger by increasing children's access to, and consumption of, nutritious food where they live, learn, and play.

Our first grant making program with NKI has been to partner with schools to provide low-income children with access to a nutritious school breakfast by expanding universal, free breakfast after the bell in the classroom (BIC). In just 2 years, our partner schools are ensuring that more than 21,000 children have access to healthful food to begin their school day.

We believe BIC should become a standard part of the school day in schools with high levels of poverty – those with a 60% or higher free and reduced enrollment. This is the level at which the federal reimbursements for school breakfast through the USDA make BIC a sustainable program without any outside private grants. In fact, school breakfast often becomes a revenue generator for food service departments when participation is over 80% and many schools experience participation of over 90% by adopting BIC. On average, school lunch participation in Massachusetts schools in low income communities is near 80%, while school breakfast is just over 30%. Universal free breakfast served after-the-bell and in the classroom is the only way to get breakfast participation up to 80%.

By increasing school breakfast participation across the Commonwealth, Massachusetts stands to leverage over \$25,000,000 in federal reimbursements according to a study we had commissioned by the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center and University of Massachusetts' Center for Social Policy.

In addition to helping schools feed hungry children and tap federal entitlement dollars, BIC is proven to:

- Ensure all children who need breakfast will eat without feeling stigmatized.
- Improve academic performance; kids learn better when well fed.
- Allow more time for learning – Reduces tardiness, visits to the nurse, classroom disturbances, and disciplinary referrals.
- Build a sense of community, and for smaller children help them develop and refine their motor skills.

Eos' first two NKI programs are described below.

Breakfast in the Classroom Start-up Grants

The BIC program provides individual schools with a grant of up to \$12,500 as start-up funds to launch BIC. In the first year of the program, school year 2013-14, Eos partnered with four

school districts: Brockton, Revere, Salem, and Worcester with impressive results. In just the first year:

- Over 6,000 children in grades PK-8 received access to a nutritious breakfast in the classroom enabling them to start their school days with the energy essential to learn.
- Breakfast participation rates dramatically rose: At one school pre-BIC, breakfast participation was at 11%, post-BIC, participation rose to a high of 86%, and for most of the others it averaged way above 80%.
- These schools leveraged approximately \$800,000 in previously untapped Federal reimbursements due to the high rates of reimbursement.

In the second year of the program, school year 2014-15, Eos awarded more than \$150,000 in new grants and added 7 new districts to the BIC cohort. Newly funded districts this year include: Chicopee, Holyoke Community Charter School, Lawrence, Malden, Somerville, Taunton, and Webster.

All 11 current BIC partner districts continue to operate BIC, meet bi-monthly as a cohort to share best practices and have formed a strong community committed to addressing hunger. Many of these districts have also started BIC at other schools without our funding but based on the lessons learned from partnering with us on the BIC program.

Healthy Start Awards

The Healthy Start Awards recognizes and provides a \$500 grant each year to any Massachusetts schools that reach at least 80% school breakfast participation. In addition, one Healthy Start Leadership Award and accompanying \$10,000 grant is presented to a leader each year for his/her exceptional efforts to feed hungry children nutritious school breakfast. The event takes place at the State House. In the first event in May 2014, the Eos Foundation recognized thirty Massachusetts schools. School community attendees included administrators, teachers, custodians, food service staff, and nurses -- all essential to building a successful school breakfast program.

The first Healthy Start Leadership award was given to Donna Lombardi, M.Ed., R.D., the Director of Nutrition for Worcester Public Schools for her tireless efforts to ensure access to a universal free, nutritious school breakfast offered in the classroom for over 7,600 students in 330 classrooms across 18 elementary schools in Worcester. Since then Donna has added two more schools and another 1,200 students.

To learn more about the Eos Foundation and the Nourishing Kids Initiative, please visit: <http://eosfoundation.org/>.