

REGIONAL ISSUE BRIEF

Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs

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ACNJ's NJ School Breakfast Report: Half of South Jersey Counties Improved

Last year in our [October newsletter](#) we reviewed data and rankings of the 8 South New Jersey Counties regarding schools serving free breakfast to low-income students as reported in Advocates for Children of New Jersey's (ACNJ) 4th Annual NJ School Breakfast Report. The ACNJ released their [5th Annual New Jersey School Breakfast Report](#) late last year, and some counties in the region saw improvement while other counties slipped in the rankings.

South Jersey Children Receiving Free Breakfast					
County	2014 %Participating	2015 %Participating	2014 Ranking	2015 Ranking	2015 Unclaimed Federal Dollars
Atlantic	44%	48%	7	7	1,963,440
Burlington	32%	32%	15	17	1,637,198
Camden	50%	50%	5	4	2,461,862
Cape May	53%	48%	2	6	304,279
Cumberland	56%	54%	1	2	1,079,628
Gloucester	32%	40%	16	12	599,802
Ocean	33%	37%	14	14	2,690,533
Salem	32%	43%	17	11	247,549

As the chart above displays, Burlington, Cape May, and Cumberland counties saw their rankings drop from 2014 to 2015, while Camden, Gloucester and Salem counties moved up in the state rankings. Atlantic and Ocean's rankings remain the same but both counties had an increase in the percentage of eligible students receiving breakfast. Also, Burlington and Camden's rankings changed but their participation rates were the same in 2014 and 2015. Overall, the state of New Jersey has done a better job of increasing participation in the federal breakfast program, moving [from 46th in the country to 28th](#). Key to the increase in participation rates across the state is the [implementation of "breakfast after the bell"](#) strategies by a number of New Jersey school districts. Breakfast after the bell strategies redefine breakfast as a school day activity as opposed to a before school activity. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement; all combined the South Jersey counties left a total of \$10,984,291 in federal dollars on the table.

The ACNJ recognizes school districts throughout the region as "School Breakfast Champions". School districts in the region with high participation rate includes Woodbine (100%), KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy at Lanning Square (94%), Salem City (92%), Egg Harbor City (90%), Paulsboro (90%), Atlantic City (88%), Camden Community Charter School (86%), Atlantic Community Charter School (84%), Mastery Schools of Camden (84%), and Fairfield (82%). The role nutrition plays in the development of children is well researched. Increasing the participation rate in breakfast programs across the region, especially in districts that serve low income students should be a priority.

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