

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5437

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As of February 10, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to breakfast after the bell programs in certain public schools.

**Brief Description:** Concerning breakfast after the bell programs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Litzow, McAuliffe, Fain, Billig, Rivers, Hill, Rolfes, Hasegawa, Jayapal, Habib, Kohl-Welles, Chase, Pedersen and Conway.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/27/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Ailey Kato (786-7434)

**Background:** Free and Reduced-Price Meals. School breakfast and lunch programs are subsidized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state, and student co-pays based on family income. In order for students to qualify for free meals, their families' income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Students whose families have income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.

Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act reduces administrative burdens for free and reduced-price meals. This provision requires schools to serve meals to participating children at no charge and reduces application burdens to once every four years. It simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures by allowing a school to receive meal reimbursement based on claiming percentages.

Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the National School Lunch Program includes a universal meal program called community eligibility. Community eligibility permits eligible schools to provide meal service to all students at no charge, regardless of economic status, while reducing burdens at the household and local levels by eliminating the need to obtain eligibility data from families through a separate collection.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports that in October 2013 more than 475,000 or 45.2 percent of public school students were eligible for free and reduced-

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price meals in Washington. Approximately 38 percent of students were eligible for free meals.

Breakfast After the Bell Programs. These programs include several food service models where breakfast is served after the beginning of the regular school day rather than in the cafeteria before school starts

Instructional Hours. Under the program of basic education, school districts must provide a specified minimum number of instructional hours per year, which are defined as those hours during which students are provided the opportunity to engage in educational activity planned by, and under the direction of, school district staff. Time actually spent on meals does not count under the definition.

**Summary of Bill:** Breakfast After the Bell Requirement. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, each high-needs school must offer breakfast after the bell to each student and provide adequate time for students to eat. High-needs school means any public school:

- that has enrollment of 70 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the prior school year; or
- that is providing universal meals under federal law and that has a claiming percentage for free or reduced-price meals of 70 percent or more.

The state must provide financial assistance to support the costs of implementing breakfast after the bell programs at participating high-needs schools.

Each high-needs school may determine the breakfast after the bell service model that best suits its students. Service models include the following:

- grab and go, where easy-to-eat breakfast foods are available for students to take at the start of the school day or in between morning classes;
- second chance breakfast, where breakfast foods are available during recess, a nutrition break, or later in the morning, for students who are not hungry first thing in the morning, or who arrive late to school; and
- breakfast in the classroom, where breakfast is served in the classroom, often during homeroom or first period.

All public schools that are not required to offer breakfast after the bell are encouraged to offer the program.

Exemption. High-needs schools with at least 70 percent of free or reduced-price eligible children participating in both school lunch and school breakfast are exempt from offering breakfast after the bell. OSPI, in consultation with community food and nutrition experts, must evaluate participation rates annually based on guidelines for calculating school breakfast participation rates.

Instructional Hours. If all students in a high-needs school are provided the opportunity to engage in educational activity planned by and under the direction of school district staff concurrently with the consumption of breakfast, the period of time designated for student participation in breakfast after the bell must be considered instructional hours.

Federal Compliance. All breakfasts served in a breakfast after the bell program must comply with federal meal patterns and nutrition standards for school breakfast programs under federal law and regulations.

Basic Education. The Legislature does not intend to include the programs under this section within the state's obligation for basic education funding under Article IX of the state Constitution.

OSPI. Before January 2, 2016, OSPI must develop and distribute procedures and guidelines for the implementation of breakfast after the bell programs. These guidelines must include ways schools and districts can solicit and consider the input of families regarding implementation and continued operation of breakfast after the bell programs.

OSPI must dedicate staff within the office to offer training and technical and marketing assistance to all public schools and school districts related to offering breakfast after the bell, including assistance with various funding options available to high-needs schools, including the community eligibility provision, programs under provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act, and claims for reimbursement under the school breakfast program.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, OSPI must collaborate with nonprofit organizations knowledgeable about equity, the opportunity gap, hunger and food security issues, and best practices for improving student access to school breakfast. OSPI must also seek partnerships with philanthropic organizations interested in supporting breakfast after the bell in high-needs schools.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Hungry kids struggle to learn and thrive. Hungry children are distracted and grumpy. The current model of serving breakfast before the school day is not working for a variety of reasons, including transportation and stigma. It is difficult to get to school early enough to eat breakfast. Making breakfast part of the school day allows schools to serve breakfast to more students, which leads to better outcomes. This program will have a positive impact for high poverty schools. Serving breakfast after the bell is a small change, but it makes a big difference. This program can decrease discipline incidents, and increase attendance rates and test scores. On-task behavior for students increases when students eat breakfast. With this program, there have been fewer complaints from students about headaches, stomachaches, and other health issues. Currently, schools can opt into having a breakfast after the bell program, but schools are not choosing to opt in. The start-up costs included in the bill are critical for making these programs a reality. Start-up grants can cover the cost of carts, kiosks, marketing materials, and other things that are needed to implement the program. The grab-and-go model is easy for students to use. Students can eat breakfast while they complete an entry task in the classroom; this helps

engage students. Some teachers were worried about breakfast in the classroom being messy, but it has not been a problem. The technical and marketing assistance from OSPI will be helpful for principals. Secondary schools have lower participation in breakfast programs. Teenagers sleep in and they are often not hungry when they get to school. Improved marketing could help increase teenagers' participation in breakfast programs.

OTHER: The bill amends, by reference, the definition of instructional hours in the basic education statute to say that time spent for breakfast after the bell may be counted in determining compliance with the law. The definition for instructional hours should be approached deliberately and thoughtfully and not amended by reference. This program can be implemented without compromising the integrity of basic education requirements. The bill should clarify that financial assistance will be provided to schools.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Lauren McGowan, United Way of King County; Katie Moshauer, WA Appleseed; Craig Huckins, Hoquiam School District, School Nutrition Director; Lyne Olson, School Nurse Organization of WA; Heather Lindberg, WA State PTA; Rayonna Tobin, Aki Kurose Middle School; Sarah Schafer, Teacher, Mt. View Elementary, Highline School District; Katharine Ryan, Food Lifeline; Bob Cooper, WA Assn. of Colleges for Teacher Education; Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals; Pauline Thomas, Carol Barker, Auburn School District; Ginny Lindberg, Student.

OTHER: Jack Archer, State Board of Education; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Educational Assns.