A Better Breakfast Morning Makes for Cool School Days

By Karen Crawford, MS, RD, CSP

School is either back or just around the corner for most kids, tweens and teens around the country. As you prepare your children for a great year, don’t forget to start them out right each morning with a good breakfast. We have heard for years that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and guess what? It truly is! After fasting all night long while you sleep, your body need energy (calories) to get all systems moving in the morning. Study after study tells us that a hungry child can not learn as well as a child who has eaten a well balanced meal. And while any breakfast is better than no breakfast, some are better than others, and, you may be missing out on a great breakfast at your local school.

Most public schools who participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), also participate in the National School Breakfast Program (NSBP). And just like the lunches, the breakfast being served as part of this program is held to strict nutritional standards governed by the USDA. A NSBP meal will provide your child with one fourth of the nutrients needed for the day, where as a NSLP meal provides one third of the nutrients needed for one day. Due to the seemingly renewed emphasis being put on breakfast in schools to improve learning capabilities and attention spans, the food manufactures who work in partnership with schools are taking huge steps to improve the nutritional profile of their products and create new innovative products that get students excited about eating breakfast!

Listed below are examples of products that are now available to schools for breakfast programs.

- Whole wheat muffins
- Whole wheat cinnamon rolls
- Whole wheat french toast sticks
- Turkey sausage patties, whole muscle chicken filets and chicken patties
- whole wheat biscuits
- Zero trans-fat biscuits
- Cereal that can be easily eaten dry and on the go
- Individually wrapped fruit flavored pancakes that do not require butter or syrup
- Individually wrapped fresh fruit servings- washed, cut and ready to eat

These are just a few of the newer products that you may see on your local school breakfast menu.

However, if breakfast is not an option at your child’s local school, take note of these types of items and incorporate them into home routine. A well balanced breakfast, in general, is one that includes lean protein and a complex carbohydrate, like a low fat baked chicken patty on a whole wheat English muffing or biscuit. An additional serving
of fruit and of course milk to drink rounds out the meal and will have your child ready to
learn.

So, when equipping your child with all the necessary tools to have a successful year, do
not forget about the most important meal of the day, a well balanced, nutritious breakfast.