

Lt. Governor Prettner Solon challenges Minnesota schools to increase breakfast access

Written by

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Earlier this month, Lt. Governor Yvonne Prettner Solon served breakfast at Pillsbury Elementary School 2250 Garfield Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 5541 to raise awareness of child hunger and its impact on education. The Lt. Governor was joined by Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius, Minneapolis School Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson, Pillsbury Principal Laura Cavender, and Ellie Lucas of Hunger Free Minnesota.

“Currently, only 40 percent of low-income Minnesota kids eligible for free or reduced price breakfast are being served. Poor nutrition does not only impact health, it also impacts how our kids do in school,” said Lt. Governor Prettner Solon. “Ensuring that every Minnesota student gets a healthy breakfast is critical to improving academic performance.”

In Minnesota, more than 200,000 children experience hunger every year. Moreover, research from the American School Health Association and National Dairy Council shows that poor nutrition among school age children directly relates to poorer class performance, more days of missed school, and declining academic achievement.

To increase access to free and reduced price breakfast, the State of Minnesota is partnering with Hunger Free Minnesota, the Midwest Dairy Council, and the Children’s Defense Fund of Minnesota to create the first-ever Minnesota School Breakfast Challenge. To encourage schools to improve access to breakfast for eligible students, the challenge will reward the top 30 Minnesota schools with \$0.10 for every new breakfast served beyond what was served last year. This can mean thousands of dollars in new funding for these schools.

The school breakfast program is proven to improve child nutrition, behavior, and academic performance. It also is one of the most effective ways to fight child hunger in Minnesota. This past session, Governor Mark Dayton and the DFL Legislature invested additional resources to help alleviate hunger in Minnesota. Those efforts included:

- **School Lunch Aid** – Sometimes the only healthy meals a child receives are those they get for breakfast and lunch in school. That is why this year Governor Dayton and the legislature invested an additional \$1 million in healthy, nutritious lunches for more than 320,000 kids in K-12 schools.
- **Milk Grants** – The new state budget invests \$1 million in grants to purchase milk at wholesale

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prices for Feeding America food banks across Minnesota. That milk will then be delivered to food shelves across the state, providing over 3 million servings of milk for hungry Minnesotans. Milk is a highly-requested, highly-desirable item for food shelves because it is a source of calcium, protein, vitamins, and minerals.

- **Food Shelf Funding** – The Governor and Legislature provided an additional \$750,000 in funding for 275 Minnesota food shelves. Last year, there were more than 3 million visits to these locations.