



Dr. Veronica C. García
Secretary of Education

New Mexico
Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-2786
www.ped.state.nm.us

Beverly Friedman
Public Information Officer
505.827.6661
Bev.Friedman@state.nm.us

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: December 12, 2007

New Mexico Ranks 1st in the Nation for School Breakfast Program

(Santa Fe, NM) — Secretary of Education Veronica C. García announced today that New Mexico is the first state in the nation to have the highest number of low income children eating free and reduced-price breakfasts at school. The results were based on the ***School Breakfast Scorecard for 2007***, released by the Food Research and Action Center.

New Mexico is the first state to exceed the ratio of 60 children eating breakfast for every 100 children eating lunch. New Mexico's participation ratio grew by 3.2 points from 57.9 in 2005-2006 to 61.1 in school year 2006-2007.

"Our school breakfast program is key in helping eliminate the achievement gap in New Mexico," said Secretary García. "Hunger is a huge obstacle for kids. It affects their concentration, energy, achievement, and mental and physical development. School breakfast is fantastic support for New Mexico communities."

"Breakfast plays an important role in improving academic performance, and we thank the Legislature for the funds they have provided us the past two years," said Gilbert Perea, Assistant Secretary for Program Support and Student Transportation. "With the \$1.8 million dollars to support food services we received for the 2006-2007 school year we had over 60% participation. With the \$2.5 million dollars of state funds for the 2007-2008 school year, we hope to improve services to even more students."

In the 2007 report, New Mexico moved to first place ahead of other top rated states including South Carolina, West Virginia, Oklahoma and Kentucky. States with the lowest participation rates were Illinois, New Hampshire, Utah, Alaska, and Connecticut.

New Mexico began the program in 2004 with a Legislative appropriation of \$475,000 which allowed 80 schools, including those identified as failing to make adequate yearly progress under the standards of No Child Left Behind, to offer breakfast in the classroom at no charge to all students for the second half of the school year. Based on the success of the program, it was expanded to 129 elementary schools in 2006, with a total state appropriation of \$1.8 million.

Run by the Agriculture Department, the breakfast program reimburses schools for providing meals to kids. Breakfasts are free for about 72 percent of the children; the rest pay about 30 cents per meal. The report came from Agriculture Department data and a survey of state nutrition officials.

###