

Nourishing our future — AEB's Eggs in Schools

BY ANNE L. ALONZO

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CHICAGO — As the marketing organization for the U.S. egg industry, entrusted with increasing demand for U.S. eggs and egg products, the American Egg Board (AEB) always has its eye on the future growth of the egg sector.

One important and growing area where AEB has been especially focused on making inroads — with both immediate and longer-term benefits — is in schools.

We're focusing on adults who make decisions about what children eat. Specifically, the AEB has been targeting the K-12 school nutrition programs and the food-service professionals that run them. The opportunity to increase egg consumption in schools is significant.

Each year, approximately 2.4 billion breakfasts and 5 billion lunches are served through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, administered by the USDA.

Most importantly — and perhaps more than any other program AEB is advancing — our Eggs in Schools Program is, arguably, one of our most fulfilling and personally satisfying endeavors. Through our efforts, we're working to nourish and feed our youth — our future — with high-quality egg products.



How does it work?

The AEB has identified the top 20 school districts, by enrollment, nationally, and I'm delighted to report that for the 2018-2019

school year, increases in egg consumption were up by 3.6 percent due to the focus on foodservice distributors and an additional 9.5 percent by USDA purchases, re-

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For the 2018-2019 school year, the AEB contributed to increases in egg consumption of 3.6 percent... resulting in more than 350 million egg servings in schools across the country.

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sulting in more than 350 million egg servings in schools across the country. The 2019-2020 school year looks to be on track for additional growth, thanks in part to two new platforms we rolled out

last year: “Eat Better. Learn Better.” and “5 Days/5 Ways.”

Both highlight the nutritional benefits of serving eggs and innovative ways schools can use eggs across the menu cycle.

Eat Better. Learn Better.

“Eat Better. Learn Better” derives from research showing that students who routinely eat breakfast perform better in school. To engage school nutrition directors and encourage usage of eggs on school menus, the program capitalizes on the egg's versatility through an Eggcellence in School Menu Innovation contest — with a chance to have their district recognized and celebrated at a special event.

A pilot last year, in which large school districts submitted egg-centric school menu items, yielded an additional 1.2 million servings of eggs, culminating with the inaugural “Eat Better. Learn Better” Celebration at Charleston County School District.

This year, the Des Moines Public Schools Food & Nutrition Program was selected from 35 applicants. The district, comprised of 33,000 students across 63 schools, serves approximately 36,000 meals a day. The two-day event — in partnership with the Iowa Egg Council — included a day of training for the district's 300-plus school nutrition professionals on the value of protein, understanding changing school meals and social media best practices to increase meal participation.

We even attracted Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and Iowa Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Julie Kenney to provide keynotes addressing the value of agriculture and nutrition in schools. The event generated considerable local media interest around eggs and school nutrition.

5 Days/5 Ways

School nutrition directors are continually looking for meal ideas that increase meal participation at a low cost while maximizing inventory. The AEB's 5 Days/5 Ways program meets this need by providing real school recipes for each day of the week — helping menu planners minimize inventory costs while maximizing egg product use by serving them mul-

EGGS in Schools

Eat Better. Learn Better.

with **School Breakfast**

Eggs as part of a well-balanced breakfast can help you **learn and stay focused in school!**

REPORT CARD

A+

incredible!

American Egg Board

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Nutrient Database © 2019 American Egg Board

iple ways across the menu cycle.

The versatility of eggs allows operators to customize offerings while enticing students with new eggcellent entrees. The program has been hugely popular, with social media and downloads far exceeding our goals and benchmarks.

Most recently, to grow demand for eggs with the expansion of breakfast service models, the AEB has introduced a new series of 5 Days/5 Ways™ menus that can be used for Breakfast in the

Classroom, All Day Breakfast and after-school snacks.

Setting sights on lunch

One of the keys to the success of the AEB's Eggs in Schools programming has been our ability to provide relevant, on-trend culinary and marketing support to school nutrition programs — featuring eggs — that meets their needs and also delights both students and parents.

Now we're moving toward the

opportunity to increase demand for eggs via lunch and snacks. With schools expanding breakfast beyond the cafeteria to alternate venues, the increase in demand for vegetarian options, the rising popularity of brunch for lunch and a bevy of other trends, eggs versatility and affordability make it the perfect choice.

We're proving that when it comes to nourishing America's youth, eggs truly are in a class of their own