

# Harvesters' BackSnack Program

## Weekend meals for hungry children

EVALUATION RESULTS FOR 2012-2013 SCHOOL YEAR



Since its inception in 2004, Harvesters' BackSnack program has grown from 30 students to 19,570 students in 2014-2015. For the 2015-2016 school year, Harvesters will provide backpacks filled with nutritious, child-friendly food to 20,250 children every week. As the program expands, it is imperative that we verify that its objectives are being achieved.

Harvesters hired the UMKC Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership to evaluate the impact of the program. Two groups of stakeholders – children and school personnel – were surveyed to determine whether nutritious food impacts program participants in seven key areas: grades, school attendance, behavior, self esteem, responsibility, social skills and health.

The surveys were completed by stakeholders in October 2012 and again in April 2013. The initial survey and post survey asked identical questions, so answers could be easily compared.

The post survey additionally asked children if they share any of the food with other family members, if they participate in any other programs offered by Harvesters, and the post survey offered space for children to write or draw about their experience with the BackSnack program.

Results from this evaluation and three previous ones consistently show Harvesters' BackSnack program is achieving its intended objectives, and has a significant positive impact on children who participate.



## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- Absences by children for medical reasons were reduced.
- Participants also had 9 percent fewer tardies.

## RESPONSIBILITY

- According to schools, students demonstrate a significant increase in a sense of responsibility over the course of the BackSnack program.

## HEALTH

- Schools report visits to the school nurse were reduced by 10 percent.
- Visits to the school counselor or social worker were reduced by 19 percent.
- Children say they enjoy eating the food in their BackSnacks because it is healthy.

*I love BackSnack because they have healthy stuff like apples and milk and stuff.*

– BACKSNACK STUDENT

## BEHAVIOR

- Schools report discipline issues among BackSnack participants were reduced by 54 percent.
- Improvements in behavior are statistically significant for those surveyed. Children report getting "in trouble" less.

*Much improved behavior.*

–BACKSNACK SCHOOL

## GRADES

- Grades improved in all four subject areas studied—math, science, social studies and English. Increases ranged from 12 percent in science to 22 percent in English.
- Children report it is easier to work without help, to understand their teachers and to understand their homework after participating in BackSnack. Results from schools confirm this.

*Excellent student, truly benefits from BackSnack.*

– BACKSNACK SCHOOL

*Has made a lot of improvements this year.*

– BACKSNACK SCHOOL

## SELF ESTEEM

- Children report an increase in trying new things, meeting new people and making choices.
- Survey results also indicate a decrease in children getting their feelings hurt.
- Schools report children are friendlier.

## SOCIAL SKILLS

- Teachers say students' social skills significantly improve after the BackSnack program. They are friendlier, respectful, responsible, well behaved and participate more in class.