Introduction

Benefits of regular breakfast:
- Improved academic performance
- Negatively associated with overweight status

Purpose:
- To investigate the relationship between encouragement from adults and adolescents’ school breakfast intake, as well as what role encouragement plays in adolescents’ overall diet quality and weight status.

Methods

Participants:
- 415 9th and 10th grade students from 8 rural Minnesota high schools were surveyed.
  - 353 of these students also completed dietary recalls.

Measurement Instrument:
- Survey. Items included self-reported level of encouragement to eat school breakfast from:
  - Parents
  - Teachers
- In school measurements:
  - Height
  - Weight
  - Percent body fat
- Dietary Recalls assessed:
  - Overall Healthy Eating Index score
  - Average servings of specific nutrition markers
  - Total calories consumed
  - Dairy
  - Fruit
  - Vegetables
  - Whole grains
  - Sodium intake
  - Added sugar

Analysis:
- Two-sample t-test for continuous and chi-square for categorical data.

Results

- Females reported more encouragement to eat school breakfast compared to males (61% vs. 55%, p<.04).
- Students participating in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program (FRPL) reported higher levels of encouragement to consume school breakfast compared to students not participating in the FRPL program (p<0.0001).
- Those who reported greater levels of school encouragement consumed less calories, less dairy, and also less sodium (p=0.01, p=0.004, p=0.02 respectively).
- Encouragement to eat school breakfast was not associated with weight status (p=0.99) or how often breakfast was actually eaten (p=0.86).

Discussion

The results indicated that of the students surveyed:
- Females and those participating in the FRPL program were more likely to receive encouragement from parents and teachers to eat school breakfast.
- Students who reported greater levels of adult encouragement seemed to have healthier diets (e.g., consumed less calories and less sodium).

Future research should explore and evaluate programs within high schools that are designed to increase the amount of encouragement students receive from adults to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.