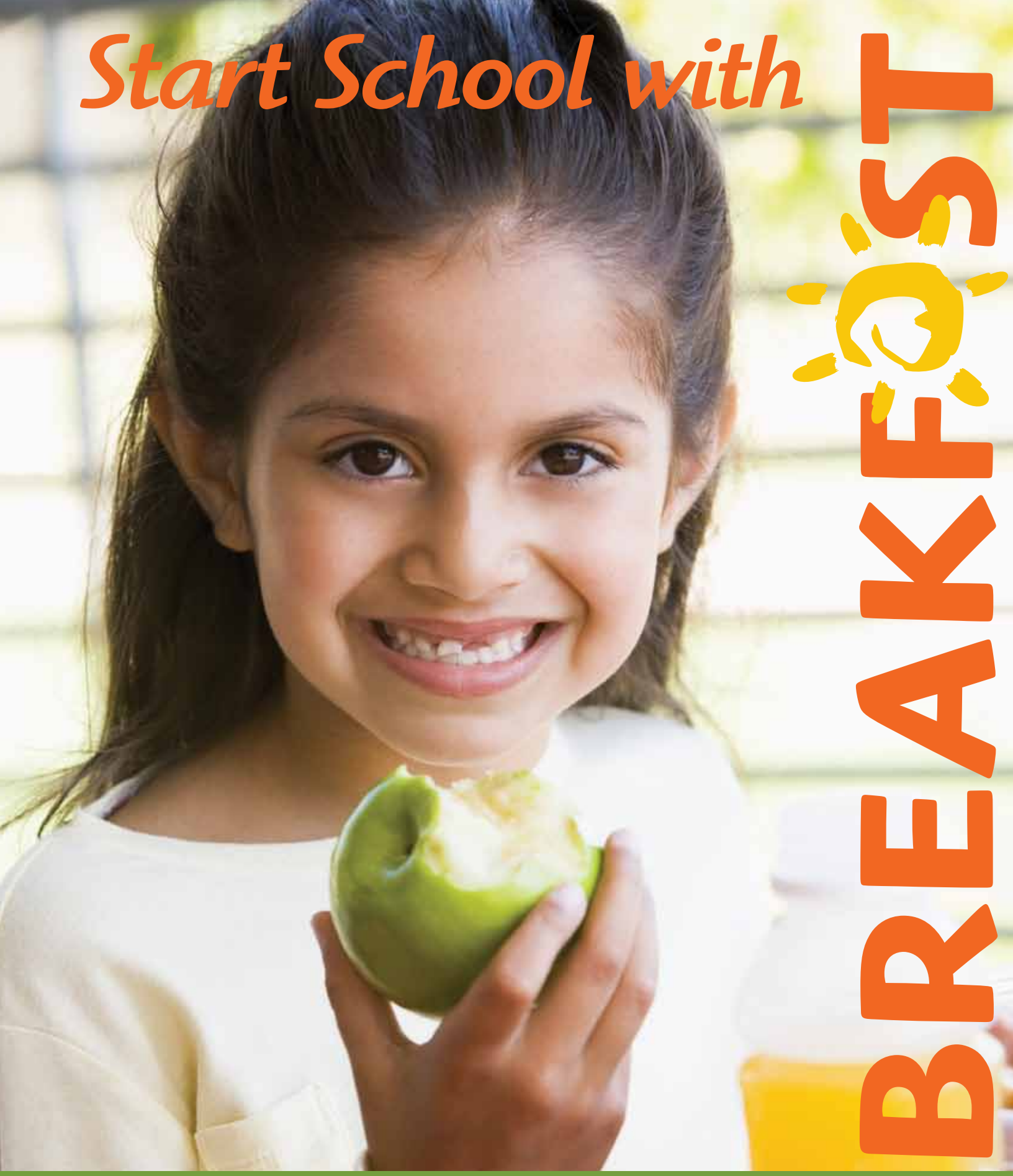
Start School with BREAKFAST



A Guide to Increasing School Breakfast Participation

NEA Health Information Network & Share Our Strength

Start School with Breakfast:

A Guide to Increasing School Breakfast Participation

Table of Contents

Section 1: School Breakfast Benefits

- Why Is Breakfast Important?
- What Is the School Breakfast Program?
- Why Increase Breakfast Participation?

Section 2: Increasing School Breakfast Participation

- How to Increase School Breakfast Participation
  - Universal School Breakfast
  - Alternative Meal Service Models
    - Breakfast in the Classroom
    - Grab n' Go
    - 2nd Chance Breakfast
    - Breakfast Vending
  - Frequently Asked Questions
- Strategies for Reaching and Involving Students
- Building a School Breakfast Expansion Team
- Grant Resources

Section 3: Useful Tools

- Tools You Can Use
  - Checklist: Items Schools May Need to Start Up an Alternative Meal Service Model
  - Procedures for Alternative Meal Service Model Implementation
  - Trainings for Educators
  - Teacher and Paraeducator Responsibility for Breakfast in the Classroom
  - Ideas for Educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time
  - Marketing New Breakfast Programs to Students
  - Ways to Evaluate the Success of Your Breakfast Program
  - School Food Service 101: The Cost of School Breakfast
  - Tips for Meeting With Your District's Food Service Director
  - Identifying Hunger in the Classroom: Signs of Hunger
  - Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points

Start School with Breakfast:

A Guide to Increasing School Breakfast Participation (continued)

Table of Contents *(continued)*

Section 4: Sample Letters

- Letter to Parents (English)
- Letter to Parents (Spanish)
- Letter to Principal or Superintendent
- Letter to School Staff

Section 5: Success Stories

School Breakfast Benefits

Why Is Breakfast Important?

Research confirms that breakfast is the most important meal of the day for children's health, academic achievement, cognitive development and mental health. Unfortunately, many children regularly skip breakfast each morning, depriving them of the important benefits associated with the morning meal. In fact, though most schools in the United States offer the School Breakfast Program, less than a quarter of all students and less than half of the students who are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast are eating it. Reasons for low participation may include:

- Busy morning schedules
- Inability to get to school early due to bus and carpool schedules
- Not being hungry first thing in the morning
- Peer pressure to socialize or play instead of eating breakfast
- Social stigma that "only low-income students" eat breakfast in the cafeteria

Fortunately, there are proven methods and best practices for dramatically increasing participation in the School Breakfast Program that can lead to marked benefits for students, teachers, paraprofessionals and schools.

Alleviate Hunger with Breakfast

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 2009 about 50 million Americans, including more than 17 million children, were food insecure. Being food insecure means having reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet and in cases of very low food insecurity, disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. The troubling fact is that one out of four children in America faces the challenges of hunger and food insecurity. In addition to the negative impact that hunger has on overall growth and health, children who struggle with hunger also have to cope with its effects on their success at school.

In the school setting, children who struggle with hunger face[1]:

- Lack of concentration
- Slower recall
- Difficulty paying attention
- Diminished academic performance
- Emotional and behavioral difficulties
- Issues with aggression and anxiousness
- Difficulty getting along with other kids
- Hyperactivity
- Increased illness, with a longer recovery time, leading to increased absence and tardiness

Missing breakfast has negative consequences even if overall hunger is not an issue for a child. However, research suggests that children who suffer from hunger are even more susceptible to the effects that missing breakfast has on their cognitive ability. Studies also show that children who skip breakfast are more likely to repeat a grade, have lower math scores, have poorer cognitive functioning and have slower memory recall than students who regularly eat breakfast.[1]

Make It Your Mission: No Child Starts the Day Hungry

For educators, some of the challenges impacting the students they serve can seem beyond their control: such is not the case with child hunger. According to a survey of America's teachers, *Hunger in Our Schools: Share Our Strength's Teachers Report*, there is very strong and broad agreement among teachers that schools and the education community have a role to play in addressing child hunger. From the survey it was also clear that, according to the teachers on the front lines, child hunger is having a direct impact on students' ability to learn.

Why get involved? Even though most schools participate in the School Breakfast Program, less than half of children who are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast are eating it. This is an issue about which educators are empowered to do something.

Consider these steps:

- *Learn more about the School Breakfast Program*: Find out if and how it is being implemented in your school.
- *Advocate against child hunger by being aware of your school's current initiatives to provide students with breakfast*: Find out if these efforts are helping and analyze how they can be improved. If the efforts are not effective, seek to understand why and concentrate your improvement strategies in that area (e.g., if the issue is that parents are unaware, then focus on ways to promote enrollment in the program).
- *Learn more about the different ways schools across the country are increasing participation in the School Breakfast Program*: The "Success Stories" section of this guide is a good place to start.
- *Determine if an alternative breakfast delivery model is appropriate for your school and use data to drive conversations*: Refer to the "How to Increase School Breakfast Participation?" section of this guide for more information.

1 Food Research and Action Center. Breakfast for Learning: Scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance. Available at: **http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning1.pdf**

What Is the School Breakfast Program?

The School Breakfast Program is a federal program that operates much like the National School Lunch Program. At the federal level, it is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Food and Nutrition Service. At the state level, the program is usually administered by State Education Agencies.

Schools participating in the breakfast program receive reimbursement for the meals they serve. School Breakfast Program federal reimbursement rates for the 2011–2012 school year* are as follows:

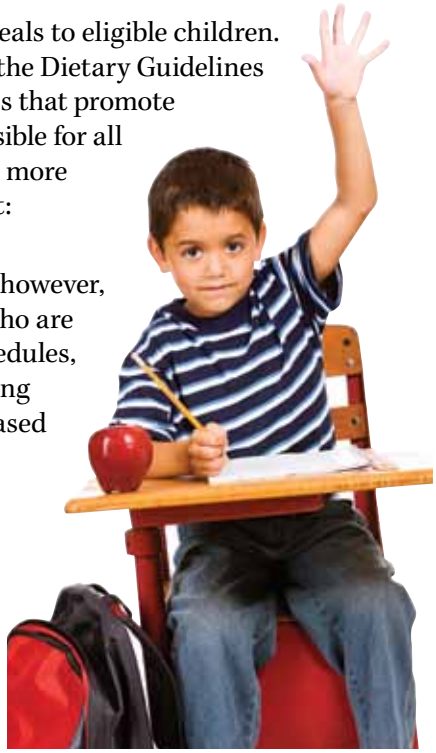
2011-2012 School Year	Federal Reimbursement Rates**	Student Meal Cost
Free Breakfast	$1.51	Free
Reduced-Price Breakfast	$1.21	≤ $0.30
Paid Breakfast	$0.27	$1.00–$1.25

To access the most current reimbursement rates, visit:* **www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/naps/naps.htm

***Schools where at least 40 percent of the lunches served during the same period two years prior were free and reduced-price may qualify for extra "severe need" reimbursements of $0.29 per free or reduced-price breakfast served.*

To qualify, schools must provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to eligible children. The meals served must meet established nutritional guidelines, including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Participating schools must also implement wellness policies that promote healthy school environments. The School Breakfast Program makes it possible for all school children in America to start the day well fed and ready to learn. For more information about the School Breakfast Program visit the USDA website at: **www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/**.

The majority of schools that offer school lunch also offer school breakfast; however, it is often underutilized. In fact, on average less than half of the children who are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast are eating it each day. Bus schedules, late arrivals to school and a reluctance to be labeled "low income" are among the reasons that many students don't participate in traditional cafeteria-based school breakfast programs.



Why Increase Breakfast Participation?

Breakfast Matters!

Breakfast is often regarded as the most important meal of the day. Is there truth to that notion? Certainly! In fact, not only is it the most important meal of the day from a nutritional standpoint, there are many important academic, health and behavioral implications as well. The myriad benefits of eating breakfast in school are well documented.

To improve academic and behavioral outcomes[2]:

Research shows that regularly eating breakfast can have significant positive implications for student behavior, academic achievement and school learning environments.

Good for the Mind

Children who eat school breakfast are more likely to:

- Reach higher levels of achievement in reading and math
- Concentrate better
- Be more alert
- Retain more of what they learn
- Participate in class

Good for Schools

School breakfast is associated with:

- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced tardiness
- Reduced behavior problems
- Reduced nurse's office visits
- Increased standardized test achievement scores
- Higher grades
- Positive learning environments

2 Food Research and Action Center. Breakfast for Learning: Scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance. Available at: **http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning1.pdf**

Obesity in youth can lead to:

- Low self-esteem
- Type 2 diabetes
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disease
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Bone and joint problems
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea

To help battle childhood obesity:

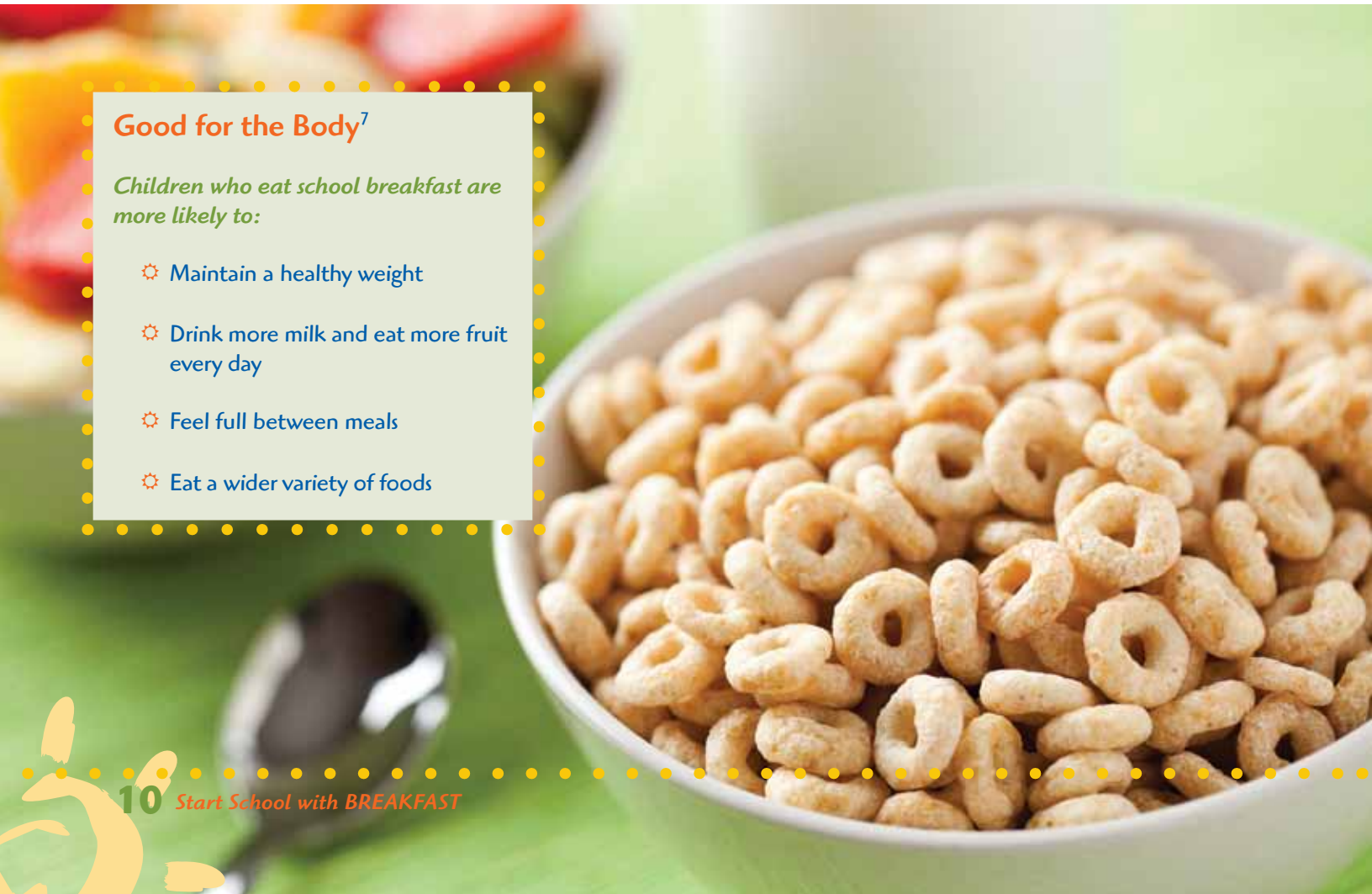
Childhood obesity is another emergent challenge that American children face. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.[3] Interestingly, studies have found that food insecurity is one of the key factors that influences overweight and obesity in poor communities.[4] Food insecurity also leads to hunger. Although it may seem odd when you first hear that eating breakfast can help to decrease obesity and end hunger at the same time, in fact the goals work hand-in-hand. Providing children with breakfast at school helps to end hunger and children who eat breakfast regularly have a better quality of nutrient intake and are less likely to be overweight or obese.

3 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: **http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/index.html**

4 Food Research and Action Center. Why Low-Income and Food Insecure People are Vulnerable to Overweight and Obesity, 2010. Available at: **http://frac.org/initiatives/hunger-and-obesity/why-are-low-income-and-food-insecure-people-vulnerable-to-obesity/**

Decades of research indicate a link between eating a healthy breakfast and maintaining a healthy weight, and skipping breakfast all together is also linked to a higher risk of obesity.[5,6] According to the USDA 2001–2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 13–14 percent of children and 30–31 percent of adolescents skip breakfast on any given day. Increasing School Breakfast participation can provide an opportunity for a healthy breakfast that students may not otherwise have and thereby aid in the battle against childhood obesity. In fact, the CDC has identified implementing a quality school meals program as one of the top ten key strategies to prevent childhood obesity. In some cases, school breakfast is healthier than breakfast served at home, thereby increasing the nutrition benefits of the morning meal.

5 Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, et al. Breakfast Habits, Nutritional Status, Body Weight, and Academic Performance in Children and Adolescents. Journal of the American Dietetic Association. May 2005.
6 Miech RA, Kumanyika SK, Stettler N, et al. Trends in the Association of Poverty with Overweight Among US adolescents, 1971–2004. Journal of the American Medical Association. May 2006.
7 Food Research and Action Center. Breakfast for Learning: Scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance. Available at: **http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning1.pdf**



Good for the Body[7]

Children who eat school breakfast are more likely to:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Drink more milk and eat more fruit every day
- Feel full between meals
- Eat a wider variety of foods

To maximize use of financial resources available to schools[8]:

Good for the Budget!

According to an analysis by California Food Policy Advocates, the fiscal benefits to schools associated with increased participation in the School Breakfast Program include increased Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding and increased federal and state reimbursement for meals served.

How does increasing School Breakfast participation increase Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding?

ADA is a statistic representing the total number of days of attendance for all students divided by the total number of school days in a given period. At the state level, ADA is used to determine funding for various aspects of public schools. How it is used and the extent to which school district funding is based on ADA is determined on an individual state basis. Research shows that effective School Breakfast Programs decrease absenteeism and tardiness, which in turn raises average daily attendance, thereby resulting in increased ADA funding for school districts.

How does increasing School Breakfast participation increase federal and state reimbursement for meals?

Any public school, nonprofit private school or residential child care institution can choose to participate in the School Breakfast Program and any student attending a school that offers the program can eat breakfast. Individual schools or districts set the price of School Breakfast and how much of that price the student pays is determined by the student's family income level. Children fall into one of three categories; free, reduced price (children in this category can be charged no more than 30 percent of the meal price) or paid (children in this category pay the full price for the meal). Schools receive federal and state reimbursements for each meal served. A different reimbursement rate is used for each group of students, but all three groups (free,

8 California Food Policy Advocates. Fiscal Benefits of School Breakfast fact sheet. Available at: **http://www.breakfastfirst.org/pdfs/HealthAndAcademicBenefits.pdf**

reduced-price and paid) receive some level of federal reimbursement. Thus, the more students who take part in breakfast, the more money the school will receive. Some schools save money because they receive increased federal reimbursements but are able to provide the additional breakfast meals while keeping costs for items such as labor and equipment the same. For schools such as these, additional reimbursements can increase the food service department's ability to offer nutritious foods such as fresh produce that would otherwise have been too expensive to regularly provide.

What does this mean to you?

Research-based budgetary findings can be helpful when encouraging collaborative involvement in efforts to improve School Breakfast participation. For more information about the potential financial benefits of increasing participation in your school's breakfast program, find out how education is funded in your state, what the implications of ADA are, and how much in federal reimbursements your school is currently missing out on.

In support of ending child hunger:

School Breakfast is an underutilized strategy for making sure that children in America have access to the nutrition they need to live healthy lives. By taking initiative to increase School Breakfast Program participation, educators can help to ensure the program's full potential to impact child hunger can be reached.

The bottom line is that less than half of the kids who are eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast are eating it. How do we know this? The School Breakfast Program works the same way as the National School Lunch Program. However, nearly 20 million kids get a free or reduced-price school lunch on an average school day and only 9.4 million kids get a free or reduced-price school breakfast on an average school day.[9]

A recent study of Houston Independent School District found that students who ate a nutritious school-based breakfast made significant gains in TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) scores for both reading and math, across ALL grade levels.[10]

9 Food Research and Action Center. School Breakfast Scorecard, School Year 2009–2010. Available at: **http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/sbscorecard2010.pdf**

10 Houston Independent School District. Available at: **http://www.houstonisd.org/FoodServices/Images/3FCB_Jan2010.pdf**

Increasing School Breakfast Participation

How to Increase School Breakfast Participation

Students who eat breakfast are more ready to learn and better prepared to take on the day. Schools that increase participation in their School Breakfast Program see improvements in several areas, including attendance, behavior and academic performance.

Increase participation in school breakfast because:

- It will help to fight child hunger
- It will help to reduce childhood obesity
- It will help children to lead healthier lives
- It will help children do better in school
- It will help increase funding available to the school

Strategies for Success

There are several strategies to increase School Breakfast Program participation. These strategies range from expanding the traditional model of serving breakfast in the cafeteria, to implementing one of the alternative service models that schools across the country are utilizing with extremely positive results.

Explore the following School Breakfast Program Implementation Strategies:

Universal School Breakfast

Universal School Breakfast refers to any program that offers breakfast at no charge to all students, regardless of income status. On average, nationally only 47 children eat free or reduced-price school breakfast for every 100 who receive free or reduced-price school lunch. Studies show that Universal School Breakfast programs significantly increase student participation in the School Breakfast Program. In Newark, New Jersey, the public school district saw a more than 150 percent increase in School Breakfast Program participation after implementing Universal School Breakfast (in the classroom) at all 75 elementary and middle schools during the 2004–2005 school year.[11]

Research shows that one of the barriers to School Breakfast participation is the stigma attached to eating breakfast at school being something "only poor students do." For this reason, many of the students who are eligible for free or reduced-price School Breakfast do not participate. One of the benefits of Universal School Breakfast is that it reduces the stigma attached to eating breakfast at school by offering the morning meal free of charge of all students.

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11 Food Research and Action Center: Universal Classroom Breakfast. Available at: **http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/universal_classroom_breakfast_fact_sheet.pdf**

How to determine if your school can do universal free breakfast:

One strategy that can aid in the offering of Universal School Breakfast is opting for Provision 2 status under the National School Lunch Act.

Provision 2[12]

Provision 2 is a federal School Breakfast Program (and National School Lunch Program) option for schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs. Provision 2 enables schools and institutions to provide free meals without the burden of collecting applications and tracking and verifying school meal data every year.

Any school that participates in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program may qualify for Provision 2. Provision 2 may be a good strategy if your school has a high percentage of low-income students (75 percent or higher).

Under Provision 2:

- All students receive free meals, regardless of family income level.
- Schools collect applications, record and track meal categories and conduct meal verifications once every four years, at most, leading to a reduction in administrative tasks for food service staff. Lunch tickets, PIN numbers and ID cards for breakfast are no longer necessary since all students eat for free.
- The school pays the difference between the cost of providing the meals at no charge to all students and the amount of federal and state reimbursement for those meals. In most cases, the administrative savings and increased meal participation offset the added cost of providing Universal School Breakfast.
- Provision 2 can be done with breakfast or lunch, by an individual school or district-wide. Experience has shown that schools save more in administrative and time costs if Provision 2 is used for both breakfast and lunch.

Eliminating Reduced-Price Breakfast

Another strategy to increase School Breakfast Program participation is to eliminate reduced-price breakfast. To do this, schools or districts only offer their students two prices for breakfast, either free or full price.

The school serves federally reimbursable breakfasts as it normally does. The only difference is that breakfast is offered at no charge to students who qualify for reduced-price meals and free meals. Even though the school only uses two categories for charging students, the school still claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student.

Eliminating reduced-priced breakfast increases School Breakfast participation because often students who qualify for reduced price meals still have to pay a certain amount for School Breakfast even though their family may not be able to afford it. When you eliminate reduced-price breakfasts these students are more likely to participate. Eliminating reduced-price breakfasts is a particularly successful strategy for schools where there is a high qualification rate but low breakfast participation from reduced-price students.

12 Food Research and Action Center. Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act. Available at: **http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/provision2.pdf**

Thinking Outside of the "Cafeteria"

The traditional school breakfast model of serving breakfast in the cafeteria before school is a good way to serve breakfast, but it may not be the best method for your school. Many educators are not aware of the alternative ways to serve breakfast, even though these methods offer proven strategies that increase participation.

Traditional School Breakfast or Breakfast in the Cafeteria is where breakfast is served in the cafeteria before the start of the school day. The benefits of this model are that hot food can be served easily and food requires no special transportation or packaging. Schools can also make use of existing space that is already set up to accommodate a large number of students in one central location; this is especially true in schools where the cafeteria and gymnasium are shared spaces. In some instances this model can prohibit participation in the School Breakfast Program. There are many students who need breakfast but do not get to the school early enough to eat it. In addition, many students want to avoid the stigma of being labeled as "poor" that is often associated with eating breakfast in school.

Alternative Meal Service Models

Breakfast in the Classroom is an Alternative Meal Service Model where students eat breakfast in their classroom after the official start of the school day. Often breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria by students via insulated rolling bags, or served from carts in the hallways by school nutrition staff using mobile service carts. Breakfast consists of easy-to-eat and easy-to-clean items, such as breakfast sandwiches or burritos, low-fat muffins or cereals, plus milk and fruit or juice. Breakfast in the Classroom typically takes 10–15 minutes to prepare, eat, and clean up. It can happen simultaneously with morning tasks such as attendance and morning work or it can be easily integrated with other instructional activities.

This method is also popular because it makes great use of space. In elementary schools in particular, the multi-purpose room (where meals are commonly served) is often used first thing in the morning for physical education classes or other purposes. This can make serving school breakfast in the multi-purpose room a challenge for custodial and food service staff when it comes to having the room back in order and ready to go. When breakfast delivery takes place in the hallway or classroom, this problem is mitigated.

When Breakfast in the Classroom is combined with Universal School Breakfast, breakfast participation increases dramatically. Universal Breakfast in the Classroom increases participation by eliminating some of the barriers attached to a traditional cafeteria-based breakfast such as social stigma and the need to get to school early.

Grab n' Go is an Alternative Meal Service Model where students pick up conveniently packaged breakfasts from mobile service carts in hallways and/or entryways or in the cafeteria when they arrive at school. Students can eat in the cafeteria, the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds.

2nd Chance Breakfast is an Alternative Meal Service Model where students eat breakfast during a break in the morning, usually after first period for secondary students or midway between breakfast and lunch for elementary students. Meals can be individually packaged and served in the same manner as they are with Grab n' Go breakfast. 2nd Chance Breakfast is also called Breakfast After First Period, 2nd Chance Brunch or Mid-Morning Nutrition Break.

Many schools already offer a morning break and 2nd Chance Breakfast works very well in this instance. By serving a reimbursable meal at this time, students who were not hungry first thing in the morning, or those who ate breakfast very early, now have a chance to eat a healthy meal. With 2nd Chance Breakfast, more students eat breakfast at school.

Breakfast Vending is an Alternative Meal Service Model that allows students to access nutritious breakfast foods through vending machines. This model is most often implemented in high schools and vending machines are usually only available prior to the start of the school day. In some schools, depending on the location of the machines, students may be allowed to utilize the machines between class periods. Students eat breakfast from vending machines in a variety of locations, including hallways, outside of classrooms, common areas and the cafeteria. Vending machines can be set up to offer free and reduced-priced options by linking vending machines to the school's Point of Sale system; students can then use their student ID or PIN to pay without cash. The benefit of Breakfast Vending is that students are offered options and are able to access breakfast independently. They work great in situations where students arrive to school at different times or may be running late and need an easy way to grab a quick breakfast before the school day begins.

In Denver, results from a two-month Breakfast in the Classroom pilot program at Central Elementary showed an increase in daily breakfasts served from 140 to 580 students, a significant decline in health clerk visits, and a nearly 40 percent drop in student discipline referrals.[13]

13 Adams County School District 14. Available at: **http://www.adams14.org/breakfast-in-classroom**

Alternative Meal Service Models Summary

Alternative Meal Service Models	Where is it served?	When is it served?	How is it served?	Who does it work with?	What does the research say?[14]
Breakfast in the Classroom	Classroom	After the school day begins, immediately following opening bell	Transported to and from the classroom by school nutrition staff and/or student volunteers	Can work in any school setting. It is most commonly used in elementary schools	Highest success rates, can be as high as 98 percent of school enrollment
Grab n' Go Breakfast	Cafeteria Hallways Common Areas (inside and outside of building)	Before the school day begins	Stations can be set up in a variety of locations including the cafeteria and other high-traffic areas such as hallways or entryways	Can work in any school setting. Works well for students who come to school too late to eat in the cafeteria	In secondary schools, over 70 percent of schools experienced an increase in School Breakfast participation
2nd Chance Breakfast/ Brunch	Cafeteria Hallways	After first period	Served in the same manner as traditional Breakfast in the Cafeteria or in the same manner as Grab n' Go	Can work in any school setting. It is most commonly used in secondary schools	Average of 15-40 percent participation level increase
Breakfast Vending	Cafeteria Hallways Common Areas (inside and outside of building)	Before the school day begins and between classes	Vending machines allow self-service of hot and cold items	Usually available in secondary schools only	Breakfast vending is a new model currently used at 1 percent of schools

What does an Alternative Meal Service Model mean for me? It means that your students will be better prepared to learn and you will be helping to end child hunger. The implementation of an Alternative Meal Service Model for School Breakfast does not necessarily mean more work for teachers, paraprofessionals, food service staff or custodial staff. It may mean that you do your job a little differently and it may mean learning a new routine. Allow yourself to "Think Outside of the Cafeteria" and it may just be a new routine that you enjoy very much.

14 School Nutrition Association. Growing School Breakfast Participation: New Ways to Delivery Breakfast to Students On-the-Go. Available at: **http://www.schoolnutrition.org/growingbreakfast**

Here is what you can expect:

	Teachers and Paraprofessionals	Food Service Staff	Custodial Staff
Breakfast in the Classroom	Proper training may be helpful Will need to complete some type of daily accountability roster A classroom routine for Breakfast in the Classroom will need to be established, in the same manner as other classroom routines and procedures that are taught at the beginning of the year A natural opportunity to teach students about healthy eating, table manners and socializing over a meal	Proper training suggested Handles food preparation and logistics Students can assist with the responsibility of transporting meals to and from the cafeteria Can be set up to work with your current School Breakfast operations with very little change Requires the same amount of staff labor as traditional School Breakfast Prepare food as you are doing now, and then pack into bags rather than serving it thought the service line	Proper training suggested Create a new trash removal procedure: Students can be responsible for clearing trash from the classroom and setting it outside of the door or placing it into a rolling trash bin in the hallway for you to collect Students can be responsible for wiping down tables and desks Custodial schedules may need to be adjusted Education about Pest Prevention and Control will need to be communicated throughout the school community Recycling programs may need to be altered to accommodate disposal of breakfast packaging, etc.
Grab n' Go	If students are eating in the hallways, you may need to develop a system for finishing and disposing/ recycling of breakfast packaging before entering the classroom	Prepare food as you do now, but pack into bags and serve in the cafeteria service line or identify new service areas throughout the school	Change in location and pick-up schedule of rolling trash cans or trash bags
2nd Chance Breakfast	None	Change in schedules	Change in schedule of cafeteria setup and cleaning Change in location and pickup of rolling trash cans
Vending	If students are eating in the hallways, you may need to develop a system for finishing and disposing/ recycling of breakfast packaging before entering the classroom	None	Change in location and pickup schedule of rolling trash cans or trash bags

Frequently Asked Questions[15]

Does an Alternative Meal Service Model mean lost instructional time?

Lost instructional time is one of the most common misconceptions about serving Breakfast in the Classroom. Teachers report that Breakfast in the Classroom does not take away from instructional time since breakfast usually takes place during morning announcements and attendance, time that previously was not being used for regular classroom instruction anyway. In fact, since more students eating breakfast at school results in fewer nurse visits, less tardiness and absenteeism and fewer disciplinary problems, which normally take away from instructional time, Alternative Meal Service Models can often lead to *gained* instructional time.

We don't have extra staffing in our school to support an Alternative Meal Service Model; will it create additional work for teachers?

Many schools have successfully implemented Alternative Meal Service Models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom, without having to hire additional help. Job duties may need to be reallocated and schedules may have to be adjusted, but if a school is already implementing School Breakfast, additional staff should not be needed to change the way it is served. A common myth about Breakfast in the Classroom is that teachers have to work "off contract" in order to successfully implement Breakfast in the Classroom. In reality, instruction or administrative activities can occur during Breakfast in the Classroom, in which case breakfast time would "count" as allowable instructional time. Speak to your school administrator about officially making breakfast time count as instructional time.

15 NEA Health Information Network. Breakfast in the Classroom School Breakfast toolkit.

How do Alternative Meal Service Models fit in with my school's Integrated Pest Management Plan?

Breakfast in the Classroom does not have to be at odds with Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The secret to success is clear, consistent communication between custodial and food service staff to ensure that breakfast foods are easy to serve, eat, and clean up. For example, food service staff may want to serve foods like bagels or tortilla wraps instead of muffins to minimize crumbs. With Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab n' Go that is eaten in the classroom, classrooms should be equipped with paper towels or wipes so students can clean desks before and after breakfast and with large trash bags with stands or rolling trash bins to facilitate easy disposal of trash from breakfast service. If your school does not have an IPM plan, talk to your school administrator about putting one in place.

Isn't it the parents' responsibility to feed their children breakfast at home?

Parents who choose to have their children eat breakfast at school are responsible parents! Busy parent lifestyles and bus and commuting schedules can interfere with children being fed breakfast at home. In addition, many children report not feeling hungry first thing in the morning but have a better appetite later in the morning. Serving breakfast at school provides all students with the morning nutrition they need to start their day.

Breakfast is already offered in the cafeteria at my school and hardly any students participate. Do Alternative Meal Service Models really increase participation?

It may be difficult to attract students to a cafeteria-based breakfast program due to bus schedules and drop-off times. Often the students are in a rush and preoccupied with getting to class and talking to friends, so even if they are hungry they do not take the time to go to the cafeteria. And unfortunately there is still a potential stigma that low-income students are eating school breakfast in the cafeteria, which keeps many students away, regardless of their socio-economic level. When breakfast is served outside the cafeteria, students see others eating breakfast so they naturally join in.

Strategies for Reaching and Involving Students

Students are an untapped influential and motivational resource when it comes to increasing School Breakfast participation. One of the most significant ways to get students to eat breakfast is to teach them what a healthy breakfast is and why it is important. Regardless of if you are attempting to increase participation in an existing traditional cafeteria-based model or planning to implement an Alternative Meal Service Model, student buy-in is a key to success.

Consider these ideas for increasing student involvement:

- Get students involved with planning the breakfast menu, through courses, clubs and contests.
- Find a way to engage students in the decision-making processes; they may be able to provide input about what service models may work best for your school. For older students, consider holding a design competition for your school's "breakfast logo" or breakfast marketing posters.
- Involve students with some of the responsibilities involved with the various breakfast models. For Breakfast in the Classroom, involve the students with cleaning up; students learn to be responsible by cleaning up after themselves and helping clean up after others. Start a School Breakfast Helper Program, where students receive special training and badges. Allow students who help with breakfast to earn hours for required community service.
- Offer incentives for breakfast participation such as a "lucky" sticker in the bottom of a breakfast bag that earns students a small prize or raffle ticket for a larger prize.
- Invite local celebrities as special breakfast guests. Ask them to speak and sign autographs for students.

Building a School Breakfast Expansion Team

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead

Your interest in this issue is just the spark your school needs to ignite the charge of expanding participation in the School Breakfast Program. Chances are, when you begin to talk with your colleagues you will soon find unity of purpose around the desired positive benefits of School Breakfast. As a good first step, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) suggests discussing your ideas about School Breakfast expansion with existing site-based and/or district-level committees or teams such as your school's health and wellness committee. If you are not already a member of one of these types of groups, then request to participate and speak at an upcoming meeting. Find out who is on the team and how nutrition policies are instituted at your school and/or in your district. If necessary, the USDA suggests creating a sub-committee of interested stakeholders to focus specifically on School Breakfast expansion.

Once the School Breakfast Expansion Team is in place, the USDA recommends the following School Breakfast Expansion Team Steps:

- Assess Your Current Breakfast Program
- Develop an Action Plan/Expansion Strategy
- Put the Plan Into Action
- Evaluate Your Plan
- Share Your Success Story

For more information about School Breakfast Expansion Teams, visit: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/assessingpotential.htm**.

Follow this valuable piece of advice offered by school districts across the country that are successfully increasing participation in School Breakfast:

Find out what other schools are doing and model your program based on the ideas that you like and think would work in your school. Refer to the "Success Stories" section of this resource for other helpful ideas.

Grant Resources

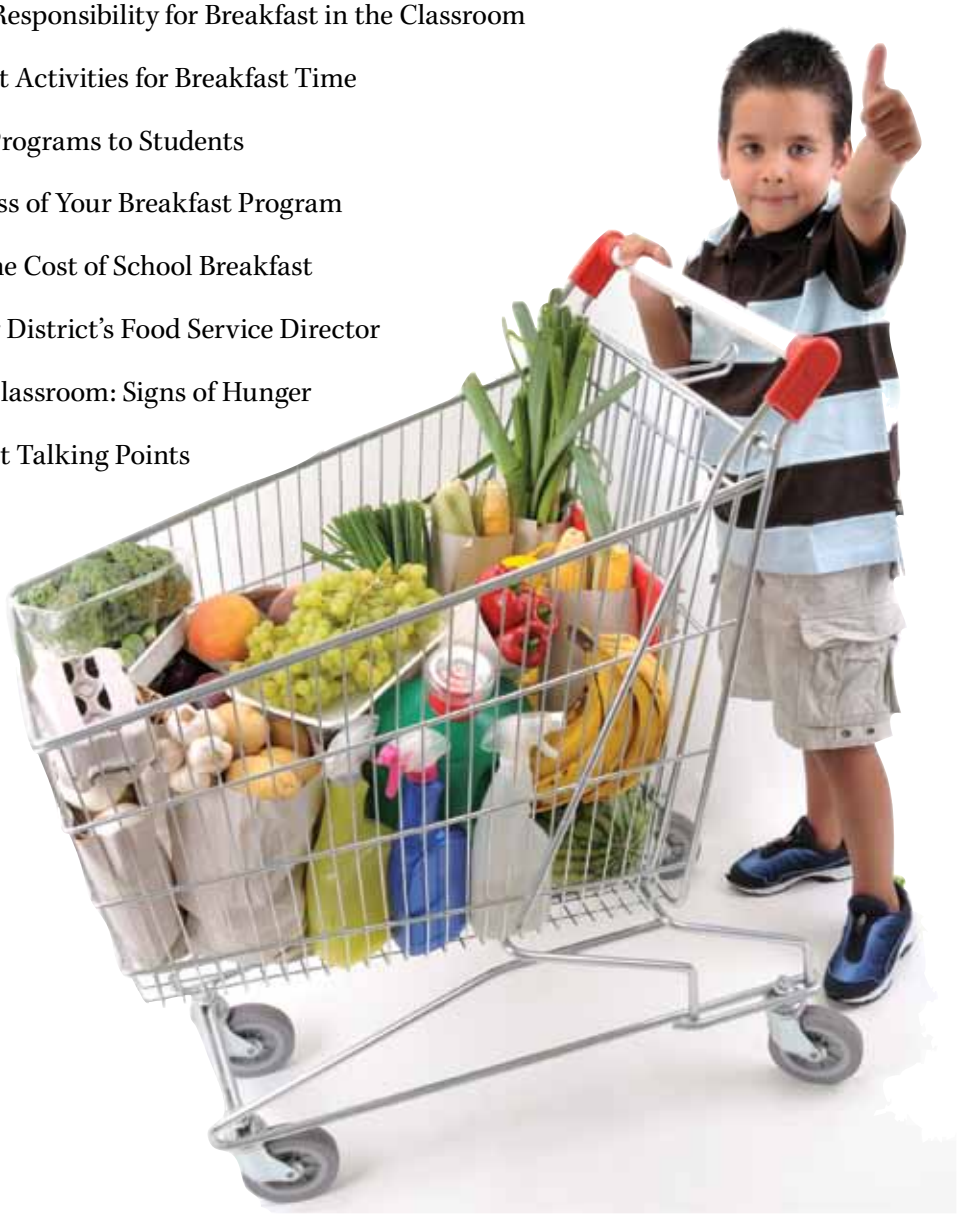
With the gaining popularity of Alternative Meal Service Models to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program, many organizations and foundations are stepping up to provide start-up funds for interested schools. Visit the websites of the following organizations for more information:

- **Share Our Strength:** **www.strength.org/grants/**
- **Fuel up to Play 60:** **http://enroll.fueluptoplay60.com/funds/introduction.php**
- **got breakfast? Foundation:** **www.gotbreakfast.org**
- **Local Dairy Council:** check out the Dairy Council website for your state for more information
- **State government:** check out your State's Department of Education website for more information
- **Federal government:** The federal government often lists breakfast expansion funding opportunities on its main grants page. Visit: **www.grants.gov** and search for "school breakfast"

Useful Tools

Tools You Can Use

- Checklist: Items Schools May Need to Start Up an Alternative Meal Service Model
- Procedures for Alternative Meal Service Model Implementation
- Trainings for Educators
- Teacher and Paraeducator Responsibility for Breakfast in the Classroom
- Ideas for Educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time
- Marketing New Breakfast Programs to Students
- Ways to Evaluate the Success of Your Breakfast Program
- School Food Service 101: The Cost of School Breakfast
- Tips for Meeting With Your District's Food Service Director
- Identifying Hunger in the Classroom: Signs of Hunger
- Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points



Checklist:
Items Schools May Need to Start Up an Alternative Meal Service Model

Grab n' Go

Food Service items

- Milk cooler or insulated portable cabinet
- Heated food cart or insulated portable cabinets for storing hot foods
- Mobile serving cart
- Portable tables
- Kitchen carts
- Handheld point-of-service scanners
- Disposable breakfast bags for breakfast food items (Tip: Have students hold a design competition to pick the design on the breakfast bag)
- Plastic serving gloves
- Disposable silverware/napkin kits

Breakfast in the Classroom

Classroom items

- Wet wipes (for students to clean their hands after breakfast)
- Spray bottle (fill with water to spray on desks for daily cleaning)
- Paper towels (for wiping off desks)
- Trash container or stand
- Extra trash bags
- Clipboards (to hold classroom accountability rosters)
- Extra pens (for teachers to check off accountability rosters)

Custodial items

- Large rolling trash bins and trash bin liners
- Extra trash bags

Food Service items

- Insulated food bag: Depending on your school's budget, there are many alternatives to traditional insulated food bags. For example, shelf-stable items can be transported via donated laundry baskets, cafeteria trays, empty milk crates or cardboard boxes.
- Wheeled cart to deliver food to classrooms: Again, if your school's budget is tight, get creative! Wheeled carts can be anything from a traditional food service cart to a wheeled insulated bag to a small "red flyer" wagon or a grocery cart donated by a local grocery store.

Key questions to determine your school's equipment needs:

- Cooling: Is there enough refrigerator and freezer space for additional food items? Additional refrigeration space is typically needed for milk, juice and yogurt storage.
- Food Containers: Breakfast items will need to be placed in containers for transport. Think about what equipment your school already has that can be used for this purpose and what will need to be purchased.
- Meal Delivery: Your school will need a system to deliver meals to each classroom. Think about which delivery model (i.e., Grab n' Go, Breakfast in the Classroom) fits best with your school, and the equipment necessary to implement your chosen model.
- Dry Storage: Is there shelving for additional cereal, breakfast bars, napkins, trash bags, etc.?
- Production: Is there enough counter space to do an assembly line production of meals?

Procedures for Alternative Meal Service Model Implementation[16]

To ensure success of your program, we recommend meetings with Principals, Custodial Staff, Teachers/ Paraeducators, Teachers' Unions, Parents, Students and Food Service Staff. Each of the following meetings should take place before any new Alternative Meal Service Model (AMSM) is implemented at your school:

Meeting	*Purpose of Meeting*	*Who Attends*	*Materials Needed*
Principal Meeting	☼ Introduce AMSM ☼ Show video* ☼ Determine existing level of support for AMSM ☼ Plan for future meetings	☼ Principal/Vice Principal ☼ Nutrition Services » Site Leader » Area Manager » AMSM Admin. Leaders ☼ Custodial staff representative	☼ "Start School with Breakfast" guide ☼ Insulated bags
Custodial Staff Meeting	☼ Explain AMSM process ☼ Discuss daily clean-up plan	☼ Custodial staff ☼ Nutrition Services » Area Manager » AMSM Admin. Leaders	☼ Trash can ☼ Dolly ☼ Plan for cleaning classrooms
Teacher / Paraeducator Meeting	☼ Introduce AMSM procedure ☼ Show video* ☼ Questions and answers	☼ Teachers ☼ Principal ☼ Nutrition Services » Site Leader » Area Manager » AMSM Admin. Leaders	☼ "Start School with Breakfast" guide ☼ Insulated bags ☼ Food Samples
Teachers' Union Meeting	☼ Introduce AMSM procedure ☼ Show video* ☼ Questions and answers	☼ Teachers' union leadership & building representative ☼ Principal ☼ Nutrition Services AMSM Admin. Leader	☼ "Start School with Breakfast" guide ☼ Plan for cleaning classrooms ☼ Insulated bags ☼ Food samples
Parent Meeting	☼ Introduce AMSM to parents ☼ Show video* ☼ Questions and answers	☼ Parents ☼ Principal ☼ Nutrition Services AMSM Admin. Leaders	☼ "Start School with Breakfast" guide ☼ Insulated bags ☼ Food Samples
Student Breakfast Team Meeting	☼ Explain in detail duties of the breakfast team	☼ Principal/VP ☼ Nutrition Services » Area Manager » AMSM Admin. Leader ☼ 5-student AMSM team from each classroom	☼ Insulated bag ☼ Trash can ☼ Sheriff badges
Food Service Employee Training	1st–Tour existing program	☼ Nutrition Services » Site Leader » Area Manager » AMSM Admin. Leader	☼ N/A
	2nd–Program Orientation	☼ Nutrition Services » AMSM Admin. Leader » Site employees	☼ Procedure Manual

*Many school districts have created videos to promote their Breakfast in the Classroom programs. A few good videos can be found at: **http://beyondbreakfast.org/breakfast-classroom-video-resources/**

16 Adapted from California Food Policy Advocates BreakfastFirst campaign. More information available at: **http://www.breakfastfirst.org/**

Trainings for Educators

Experience has shown that the most successful Alternative Meal Service Models incorporate training for classroom teachers, paraeducators and other school staff prior to the start of the program. Below you'll find a list of helpful topics to cover during training for teachers and paraeduators.

Process and logistics of serving breakfast in the classroom—Consider creating a "breakfast timeline" to walk classroom educators through the daily steps of breakfast service. Steps to outline include: the time breakfast bags will be picked up or delivered to the classroom; the time teachers allow students into the classroom; the time for eating breakfast and completing the accountability roster; the time to dispose of trash, pack up unused food and return insulated bags and accountability rosters to the cafeteria or hallway; and the expected completion time of all breakfast activities. Remember that the timeline may need to be grade-specific. Younger grades (Pre-K and Kindergarten) often require more time for breakfast activities.

Creating student helper teams—Encourage educators with older students to create a "Breakfast Squad" to help with breakfast service. Job assignments can include two-person teams for delivery, meal service and cleanup along with one breakfast sheriff to oversee the teams. Elections can be held periodically to make sure all kids get to try this leadership opportunity.

Meals accountability—Training educators to correctly perform meal accountability is very important to ensuring accurate meal counts and thus accurate financial reimbursements to food service. Topics to cover include what constitutes a full reimbursable meal and a walkthrough of how to complete the accountability roster. Schools can print alphabetized classroom breakfast rosters by using their meal software program. Use the training to garner educator input about whether they prefer a roster be sent and collected daily with the meals or delivered each Monday for completion during the week.

Food storage—Many classroom educators may not know the ins and outs of food service guidelines, including the significance of keeping food at a specific temperature. Topics to cover include the importance of returning unopened food to the school kitchen for re-use and why food should not be kept in the classroom or student lockers for students to snack on later in the day.

Communicating with students about Breakfast in the Classroom—Provide a list of talking points for educators to help them introduce the new Alternative Meal Service Model to students before the program starts. Topics to cover may include classroom manners, time to eat and election of student teams for breakfast helper jobs.

Activity Ideas during breakfast time—Use the "Student Activities for Breakfast Time" booklet in this guide to start a conversation about activity ideas for students during breakfast time. Depending on your district, breakfast time may count as instructional time, making "breakfast-friendly" instructional activity ideas all the more important.

Classroom cleanliness—Maintaining a school and classroom environment that is clean and pest-free is integral to the sustainability of any Alternative Meal Service Model. Consider inviting a member of the custodial staff to speak with educators about best practices for keeping the classroom and other common breakfast areas clean and pest-free.

Most important: Be sure to involve teachers and paraeducators in the planning process! Use the training as an opportunity to gain valuable feedback from school staff about what breakfast models and processes will work best for their classrooms.

☼ TIP: Conduct a "mini dress rehearsal" of your new Alternative Meal Service Model prior to launch to work out potential issues in advance. Consider having food service staff prepare and pack meals for a few classrooms to see how the new preparation process will work in the school's kitchen. Transport the packed meals to a few classrooms to see if any unexpected issues come up (i.e., uneven surfaces, stairwells, narrow doorways, etc.) that need to be addressed before launch day.

☼ TIP: It can be helpful to have extra staff or parent volunteers available to help out during the first week of a new Alternative Meal Service Model. Once a routine is developed the school staff should be able to handle it on their own.

Teacher and Paraeducator Responsibility for Breakfast in the Classroom

School staff are important partners in any Alternative Meal Service Model, and gaining cooperation and collaboration from teachers and paraeducators is especially important in the Breakfast in the Classroom program. Below is information about teacher and paraeducator responsibility with Breakfast in the Classroom, along with a helpful sample daily timeline.

Teacher/Paraeducator Responsibility

- Complete the daily accountability roster by checking off the names of those students who take a complete breakfast (entrée, fruit/fruit juice and milk).
- While students eat breakfast, teachers are encouraged to complete administrative functions (check in library books, take attendance) discuss plans for the day, or lead an educational activity [see *"Ideas for educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time"* fact sheet].
- Supervise students as they dispose of breakfast trash in the trash bag (provided to your classroom each morning) and place the trash bag and breakfast delivery equipment in the hallway outside the classroom when breakfast is finished.
- Enjoy a FREE breakfast each morning, complements of [*Insert School Name Here*].

Sample Timeline for Breakfast in the Classroom

7:45 am	Student helpers or cafeteria staff pick up pre-packed insulated bags from cafeteria and deliver to assigned classrooms.
8:00 am	Teachers pick up students from their designated waiting locations and walk to classroom.
8:05 am	Students enter classroom, put away book bags/jackets and proceed to a designated classroom area to take the day's breakfast offerings (entrée, fruit/fruit juice and milk); students return to their desks and eat breakfast. Teachers or paraeducators complete the accountability roster as students are taking meals.
8:15 am	Students dispose of trash in provided double-lined trash bags and place trash bag in the hallway for pickup by custodial staff. Students return unopened leftover food to the insulated bags. Insulated bags and accountability rosters are placed in the hallway for pickup by food service staff or returned to the cafeteria by student helpers.
8:20 am	Regular classroom activities commence!

Ideas for Educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time

Remember, students can be empowered too. Increase School Breakfast participation by teaching students about the importance of eating breakfast and about how to make nutritious and healthy food choices. The Breakfast in the Classroom Alternative Meal Service Model provides an excellent opportunity to fuse breakfast with learning.

Ideas for Integrating Breakfast in the Classroom with Instruction:

- **Read Aloud Time**—Read to students from a picture or chapter book while they are eating. Once a week, read a book that has to do with nutrition and/or being physically active. Students may also enjoy listening to books on tape.
- **Combine Breakfast and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)**—Allow students time for self-selected silent reading while they eat.
- **Practice Math Facts**—While eating, consider playing a game with flash cards (e.g., Around the World) where two students race to give the answer to the math class and the student who wins moves on.
- **Practice Spelling Words**—While eating, consider playing a game with words (e.g., Sparkle) where students take turns giving the next letter in a spelling word until it is spelled correctly.
- **Show Instructional Media (e.g., television programming or DVDs)**—View content relevant to what the students are learning while students are eating.
- **School News Program**—Do you have a school news program? If not, consider starting one. Have classes take turns recording a school news program. Create DVDs and distribute school-wide, let students watch the school news while eating breakfast.
- **Current Events**—During breakfast provide students with articles related to current events. Prepare copies of newspaper editions and/or record news stories. During breakfast have students discuss and debate current events.
- **Life Skills/Character Education**—Use breakfast time to learn about important Character Education skills. Apply the skills to the context of eating school breakfast (e.g., when students help to serve and clean-up breakfast, they are learning about "responsibility").
- **Food Pyramid Sort and Log**—Teach students how to eat healthy by using the Food Pyramid as a guide; discuss the importance of variety and balance. Provide younger students with Food Group Sorting Placemats (to make the placemat: on construction paper, create a five-column chart, label it with the five Food Groups, and laminate). Students can use the placemats while they eat breakfast and sort the items in their daily breakfast into the proper food groups as they are eating. If the chart is laminated, students could even create tally marks on the sorting chart using a dry-erase marker.
- **Vocabulary Development**—Work with the words that the students are learning as they enjoy their breakfast. Students can: List the names of the foods they are eating and put them in alphabetical order, study the history of the food, list adjectives that describe the food and list verbs that describe the way that they eat the food.
- **Demonstrations**—Use breakfast time to demonstrate something that you will be teaching about later. Perhaps you are going to demonstrate how to write a Personal Narrative, have the students watch your demonstration while they eat. Science demonstrations work well too.
- **Fine Arts**—As they are eating, have students listen and react to a variety of music or view and discuss a slideshow of art collections.
- **Presentations**—Have students give book reports, speeches or small group presentations during breakfast.

Ideas for Educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time *(continued)*

- **Family Breakfast**—Once a month, invite family members for breakfast. Display student work and portfolios which can be reviewed during breakfast time.
- **Story Telling or Reader's Theatre**—Use breakfast time for you or students to present prepared and rehearsed Story Telling or for small groups of students to perform a Reader's Theatre.
- **Literature Circles**—While eating breakfast, students can meet with their literature circle groups or book clubs to summarize and discuss prior reading (e.g., the chapter that they read for homework) or answer specific questions about the book they are reading.
- **Homework Review**—While eating breakfast, go over the homework from the night before.
- **Test Review**—During breakfast play games to review for tests, such as Jeopardy-style quiz.
- **School-Wide Enrichment Clubs**—Enrichment Clubs are self-selected special interest clubs that allow students to be challenged and/or expand their learning in an area of their own interests. Enrichment activities that involve listening, speaking, studying or researching can be conducted during breakfast.
- **Classroom Guests**—Invite guest speakers to talk during breakfast (e.g., school nurse or social worker) and share about a variety of topics (e.g., bullying, healthy living, eating, relationships).
- **Class Meetings**—Use breakfast time to conduct your class meeting. During class meeting students are assigned new class jobs, class rules are discussed and reinforced, upcoming events are reviewed and class "business" is conducted.
- **Mind Puzzles and Riddles**—Post mind puzzles and riddles (e.g., Plexers) for students to think about and solve while they are eating.

Analysis of the 2003–04 Academics & Breakfast Connection (ABC) classroom breakfast pilot program in upstate New York showed that there were significant declines in tardiness and disciplinary office referrals and moderate declines in absenteeism and school nurse visits during the program year.[17]

17 Nutrition Consortium of NY State. Available at:
http://www.nutritionconsortium.org/childnutrition/documents/FinalABCupdated.pdf

Marketing New Breakfast Programs to Students[18]

Check out these marketing ideas from the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

- **Celebrate National School Breakfast Week**–National School Breakfast Week is held annually during the month of March. Events such as a Breakfast Dress-up Day or a School Breakfast poster contest can be simple or elaborate. Be creative and do what works for your school!
- **Invite Parents to Breakfast**–Offer samples of School Breakfast items so parents can taste the food their children have at school. Give a tour of the food service department and provide family-sized recipes for parents to take home (if possible, include a nutrient analysis to show how the meals compare with nutrition standards).
- **Contests**–Create an opportunity for students to design a menu for the month or a poster promoting breakfast at school. Create your own criteria regarding paper size, message and theme. You could also offer different grades different prizes so that each class has an opportunity to win. Display the winning posters in the cafeteria.
- **Celebrity Day**–Host an event in which local celebrities join students for breakfast. Consider reaching out to mascots from sports teams, members from a university sports team, news reporters, a familiar local face, the mayor or a city councilperson. Seek out people who are familiar to the children and bring about a positive image.
- **Theme Days**–Choose different themes for the cafeteria and serve food that supports that theme. Turn the cafeteria into a tropical paradise with a Hawaiian Day Celebration using cutout palm trees and grass skirts to decorate the serving counter, and have staff wear Hawaiian shirts and leis. Serve tropical fruit muffins or serve pineapple as the fruit that day. Showcase menus based on a holiday, culture or team to make school meals fun. Celebrate diversity with cultural sensitivity regarding your school's population.
- **Serve Breakfast at Lunch**–Create interest in the breakfast program by offering popular breakfast choices at lunch.
- **Menu Ideas**–Plan menus that offer a wide variety of popular, healthy choices and display the information in a creative way. Take advantage of software available through the Internet, which includes a pre-designed menu, choose descriptive terms that make foods interesting and enticing and borrow ideas from restaurant menus to describe various foods and how they are prepared.
- **Website**–Use your school's website to announce promotions and contests and post breakfast menus and nutrition information.
- **Flyers/Banners**–Display eye-catching flyers in school hallways and include flyers in school newsletters, Parents' Night or Orientation. If you have extra funds, consider printing a large school breakfast banner for the school entrance to promote the program.
- **Announcements**–Promote school breakfast every day over the school intercom or on the school radio station. Remind students that eating school breakfast every day provides them with energy for activities, gives them a chance to socialize and helps them do better in school.
- **Student Advisory Group**–Ask students to volunteer to test new menu items, flyer designs and marketing ideas. Students from the class councils, Associated Student Body, Honor Society or other organizations may want to participate, too.

18 Adapted from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, School Breakfast Program Marketing Ideas. Available at: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/marketingideas.htm**

Marketing New Breakfast Programs to Students *(continued)*

- **Taste Tests**–When creating new recipes or menu items or deciding which ones to keep, hold a taste test with students before changing the menu.
- **Breakfast Giveaways**–Consider placing a sticker on the bottom of a few random trays. The student who receives that tray wins a prize.
- **Public Service Announcements**–Public service announcements can be an effective way to deliver your message about breakfast or school meals. If you have a successful sports team with a large following that fits your target audience (i.e., parents of students in elementary, middle and high schools), ask the organization to make an announcement as part of its community service.
- **Automated Messages**–Record a message about school breakfast that plays while parents are "on hold" waiting to speak with school administrative staff.
- **Press Releases**–Send press releases to local newspapers or community newsletters before the start of the school year to notify parents that the School Breakfast Program is available to all students. Include information about the convenience, cost and nutritional value of school breakfast.
- **Existing Forums**–Provide information about School Breakfast at Parent-Teacher Association meetings, staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, local education association meetings, school and community events and more.
- **Involve Advocates**–Collaborate with community partners such as anti-hunger advocates who can support and publicize school breakfast initiatives.
- **Ask for Input**–Are there schools in your area that have implemented and promoted an especially successful breakfast program? Talk with them about their experience and ask them to share any insight on how to raise participation rates for your program.

Ways to Evaluate the Success of Your Breakfast Program

Ok, so you've got your Alternative Meal Service Model up and running…now what? Evaluate! Evaluation is essential to tracking the success of your program and identifying potential areas for improvement. Below are some suggested evaluation metrics[19]:

Program outcomes:

Meal participation—The food service department collects meal participation data on a daily basis and can easily generate reports that show trends in average daily participation over time. Consider making a colorful graph to hang in the cafeteria or school hallway to show participation before and after implementation of the new Alternative Meal Service Model.

Student acceptance of meal offerings—Do you notice that breakfast participation increases or decreases when certain breakfast menu items are served? Asking for student input can help shed light on meal participation fluctuation and help with future menu planning. One idea is to hold student taste tests to determine what types of foods and flavors students prefer. Food service staff can also track and record the food served vs. food consumed at breakfast each day to get additional data on student preference.

Staff acceptance of the new breakfast program—One of the most important factors to the success of any new school program is buy-in from school staff. Instead of just relying on anecdotal evidence and individual comments, schools can collect comprehensive data to assess whether staff has accepted the new program as well as potential areas for improvement. Ideas for how to collect data can include semi-structured interviews with school food service staff, teachers, paraeducators and custodians, an anonymous comment box at school or a simple on-line or paper survey at the beginning and end of the school year.

Intermediate outcomes:

School attendance and physical health: Many schools report decreases in absenteeism, tardiness and nurse's office visits after implementing an Alternative Meal Service Model. Consider analyzing these metrics at your school to identify trends and build support for your new breakfast program.

Long-term outcomes:

Academic achievement, cognitive functioning and behavioral outcomes: Eating breakfast at school is linked to improvements in math, reading and vocabulary; improved standardized test scores; increased alertness and concentration; and improved behavior. Consider looking at year-over-year data of your school's standardized state test scores and behavior and discipline referrals to assess trends. Effects on alertness and concentration can be assessed by interviews or surveys of teachers and students.

Health Status: Numerous studies have shown that children who eat breakfast have better intakes of essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients such as calcium, iron, fiber and protein. If your school or district has funding to collect this data, consider comparing changes in student intake of essential nutrients by looking at the nutrients in breakfast foods selected and eaten by students. Also consider tracking changes in student body mass index (calculated using height and weight data) before and after program implementation. Be sure to get the appropriate permissions from school administration, and if necessary an Internal Review Board, before collecting or analyzing any student personal information.

19 Adapted from: Ponza, M. et al., "Universal-Free School Breakfast Program Evaluation Design Project: Final Evaluation Design." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, December 1999. Available at: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/DemoProjects/sbppilot/SBPdesign.PDF**

Ways to Evaluate the Success of Your Breakfast Program *(continued)*

School Climate: The social aspect of eating breakfast in the classroom can help improve school climate by fostering community among students and staff. Many factors go into school climate including classroom behavior, student's attitudes toward learning and feelings about safety and security at school. Improvements in school climate could be measured via student and staff surveys to qualitatively assess behavior, attitudes, safety and security.

> ☼ TIP: Once you have data collected and analyzed—share it! Posting selected school-level data—such as average daily breakfast participation—can help motivate principals and school staff and can create healthy school-to-school competitions to improve breakfast participation in lagging schools.

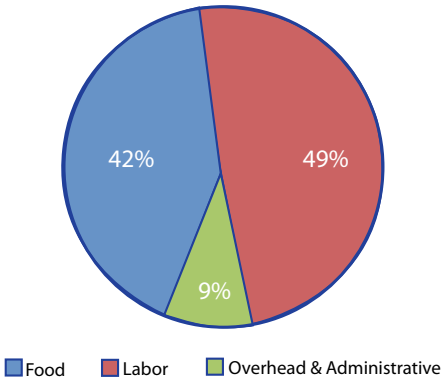
An evaluation of the Maryland Meals for Achievement universal in-classroom breakfast program showed a 45 percent increase in breakfast participation, improvements in staff perceptions of student behavior and the school learning environment, significantly lower rates of tardiness and disciplinary suspensions, and significantly higher standardized test scores for universal-free schools.[20]

20 Murphy JM et. al. "Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report." Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, 2001.

School Food Service 101: The Cost of School Breakfast

Many people, especially those unhappy with the food served at school, may wonder why the school food service department serves the food they do. Below you'll find an overview of how a typical school food service operation works, and some helpful tips about approaching your food service director about changes to school meals.

- Unlike other school departments, the food service program does not receive money from the school budget. It is expected to be self-funding, meaning that it must bring in enough revenue from the sale of food to support its day to day operations.
- Food service program costs include food, expenses for labor (salary and benefits), overhead (pest control for the cafeteria, utilities, maintenance of kitchen equipment, garbage collection, etc.) and costs associated with running the food service department (ordering and inventory, processing and filing meal applications).
- Usually the price students pay for their meals doesn't fully cover the expenses to run food service operations. To help cover costs, the federal government provides reimbursements to school districts. In 2011–12 the School Breakfast Program federal reimbursements were*:



2011–2012 School Year	Federal Reimbursement Rate**	Student Meal Cost	Maximum Total Revenue per Meal
Free Breakfast	$1.51	Free	$1.51
Reduced-Price Breakfast	$1.21	≤ $0.30	$1.51
Paid Breakfast	$0.27	$1.00–1.25	$1.52

*To access the most current reimbursement rates, visit: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/naps/naps.htm**

**Schools where at least 40 percent of the lunches served during the same period two years prior were free and reduced price may qualify for extra "severe need" reimbursements of $0.29 per free or reduced-price breakfast served.

- The actual amount of money spent on food varies by school district; in most cases, about 42 percent of the cost of School Breakfast can be attributed to food. So, if a school receives $1.51 to serve a free/reduced-price breakfast, only $0.63 of that money is available to purchase food.
- Of the money left over to purchase food, about $0.20 must be used to purchase milk, which is required to be offered at breakfast. That leaves about $0.43 left to purchase the rest of the meal, which, in addition to milk, is federally required to contain a vegetable or fruit, grains and a meat or meat alternative (such as cheese).
- Now that you have the facts, imagine trying to go to the grocery store and purchase a full breakfast for $0.43. And try to keep this in mind when going to speak with your school food service department!

Tips for Meeting With Your District's Food Service Director[21]

Many people are quick to criticize school food, yet very few people understand the difficulties food service directors face in offering nutritious foods within the current budget limitations. Below are some tips to consider when meeting with your district's food service director (FSD).

- Contact the FSD in advance to request a meeting. If relevant, let the FSD know that you represent a group of individuals that would like to see improvements to school food, and would like to meet to see how you can help.
- In the first meeting, consider starting by asking the FSD what type of school food program would he/she like to see in the district if there were no financial and regulatory issues to deal with. You may be surprised at his/her answer; perhaps he/she would also prefer to serve fresh, cooked-from-scratch food at school.
- At the meeting, let your FSD know right away that you understand his/her need to focus on the financial bottom line. Encourage the FSD to share with you the financial and regulatory constraints that the district food service program is under. Be willing to listen and learn. This will help you better understand the food service department as a whole, rather than focusing on one issue of food quality.
- Explain that you want to work in partnership with the FSD to change the conversation from "school food stinks" to "school food is getting better and we all need to pitch in and help instead of just blaming food service."
- Think of ways you can help your FSD, such as:
  - Help get more students qualified for free/reduced-price meals by encouraging parents (at PTA meetings, orientation or Back to School) to complete their application forms.
  - Find out if schools are selling foods that compete with the school meals program ("competitive foods") and speak with school administration about removing or limiting competitive foods from schools.
  - Help spread the word to parents and the community about positive changes to the district's food service program. If your school/district has made improvements (such as serving more fresh fruits and veggies) make sure school staff and parents know about it!

21 Adapted from Woldow, Dana, "How to make friends with your nutrition services director". Available at: **http://peachsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/PEACHSF-Everybodys-guide-How-to-make-friends-with-your-nutrition-services-director.pdf**

Identifying Hunger in the Classroom: Signs of Hunger[22]

Most kids won't tell you that they don't have food at home, but you can look for the telltale signs. Every parent knows that a hungry child is at risk. Hungry children can't grow, develop and learn like other kids. They have trouble focusing and getting along with others. Children who aren't getting enough food at home might complain often of headaches, stomachaches and other ailments. They will likely fall behind in virtually every way.

A child facing hunger may:

- Suffer from poor health, feel sick or tired often
- Fall asleep in class
- Have difficulty with math and language skills
- Be more aggressive and fight with classmates and teachers
- Feel anxious and have difficulty concentrating
- Exhibit slower memory recall
- Underperform and have poor grades
- Frequently miss school or arrive late

If you know a child who exhibits these behaviors, there may be more going on than what you are seeing. Look deeper and when you find hunger, do something to help. You can find resources at your school, your local food bank and at: **http://strength.org/teachers**.

22 Adapted from Share Our Strength web site: **http://strength.org/school_breakfast/recognize_the_signs_of_hunger/**

Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points[23]

Use these talking points as a reference when speaking to others about the need and benefits of increasing participation in the School Breakfast Program.

Background

- The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally assisted meal program that operates in public and private nonprofit schools and residential child care institutions. Participating schools receive reimbursement for breakfasts that meet specific nutrition requirements.
- Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the SBP regardless of household income.
- Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.

Need for Expansion

- The majority of schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program also participate in breakfast. However, there is a significant disparity in participation rates at breakfast compared with participation rates at lunch, especially for low-income students.
- Nationwide, in the 2009–2010 school year only 47 percent of low-income students who participated in the School Lunch Program also participated in the SBP.
- In [*Insert Your Distric's Name Here*] district, [XX] percent of students who participate in School Lunch also participate in School Breakfast. [XX number] more students could benefit from breakfast in the morning. [*Note: If this information is not available at your district level, you can find state data by contacting your state's Department of Education*].
- Improving access to the SBP is an opportunity for schools to increase participation and ensure that all students can start the day with the nutritional and academic benefits of breakfast.
- Exploring alternative methods for providing breakfast meal service that meets the needs of school staff and students can increase participation and revenue. For example, Breakfast in the Classroom has been shown to be very successful in elementary schools, whereas Mid-Morning Breakfast works well in middle and high schools.
- Student participation is the key to operating a successful and sustainable SBP.

Benefits of Breakfast

- Academic Benefits
  - Eating breakfast can help improve math, reading and standardized test scores.[1, 2, 3]
  - Children who eat breakfast are more likely to behave better in school and get along with their peers than those who do not.[3, 4]
  - Breakfast helps children pay attention and perform problem-solving tasks, and improves memory.[5, 6]
  - Children who eat school breakfast are less likely to be absent or tardy than those who do not eat breakfast at school.[7]

23 Adapted from the US Department of Agriculture's "Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points". Available at: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/breakfast_talkingpoints.pdf**

Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points *(continued)*

- Behavioral and emotional problems are less common among children who consistently have access to regular meals.[8]
- Schools that provide Breakfast in the Classroom to all students have shown decreases in tardiness and suspensions as well as improved student behavior and attentiveness.[9, 10]
- Eating breakfast improves children's performance on demanding mental tasks and reaction to frustration.[11]

- Nutritional Benefits
  - Children who eat breakfast tend to have more adequate nutrient intakes than children who do not.[12]
  - Adolescents who eat breakfast tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI). Higher BMIs can indicate overweight and obesity.[13]
  - By eating breakfast, students get more of important nutrients, vitamins and minerals such as calcium, dietary fiber, folate and protein.[14, 15]
  - Low-income elementary school girls who participate in the School Breakfast, School Lunch or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formally known as the Food Stamp Program) have significantly less risk of being overweight.[16]
  - Studies have shown that children who eat breakfast on a regular basis are less likely to be overweight.[17, 18, 19]
  - Eating breakfast as a child is important for establishing healthy habits for later in life.

Strategies for School Breakfast Expansion

- Explore Alternative Service Methods
  - Grab n' Go breakfasts are pre-packaged with all components of the meal. These breakfasts can be available at sites around the school for pick up on the go, during break or before/after first period.
  - Breakfast in the Classroom is breakfast delivered to and consumed in the classroom, typically first thing in the morning, after the start of the school day.
  - Breakfast after first period is served after the first period between classes and finished during the first period or during students' break.
- Utilize Provision 2
  - The USDA Food and Nutrition Service makes available three alternate methods of determining student eligibility for reimbursement and daily meal counts in the school meals programs. Provision 2 enables schools to provide meals at no charge to all students, which reduces administrative costs and burdens.
  - Provision 2 is most effective in schools with a high percentage of students eligible for free/reduced price lunch.
  - Schools that provide breakfast at no charge to students—especially when coupled with alternative service methods—have higher breakfast participation. Students with frequent breakfast participation have lower rates of tardiness and absenteeism.[20]
  - Schools utilizing Provision 2 eliminate fees that may be a barrier to participation for many low-income children. In addition, this may reduce the stigma associated with school meal participation.

Expanding School Breakfast Talking Points *(continued)*

Strategies for School Breakfast Expansion (continued)

- Direct Certification
  - Students who are recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are automatically eligible for free school meals. By obtaining information from your state or local social service agency, you can identify children who are eligible for free meals.
- Make Breakfast Expansion and Outreach Part of Your Wellness Policy
  - To facilitate breakfast expansion, schools can take advantage of existing networks such as school wellness policies to promote school breakfast.

Endnotes

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Sample Letters

Letter to Parents (English)[24]

Breakfast in the Classroom *(adapt for Grab n' Go or other models)*

Beginning [*Insert Start Date Here*]!

Dear Parents,

Is the morning rush at your house a mad dash to get out the door with your children barely having time to grab their homework, much less eat a nutritious breakfast? If this sounds familiar, you will be relieved to know that getting that important morning start will no longer be a challenge.

Beginning on [*Insert Start Date Here*] your child can take part in an innovative new program called "Breakfast in the Classroom." Just as the name implies, a nutritious breakfast will be served to each student, right in the classroom, every school day. Students will have an opportunity during the first 10 minutes of class to eat breakfast with their classmates and get the fuel they need to be ready to learn. Breakfast is still ***FREE***. There will be no breakfast service from the cafeteria before school.

The direct impact of breakfast on academic performance has been well documented and we are happy to be working with the Food Services Department to bring you this proven approach to creating classroom environments that promote maximum learning.

How does Breakfast in the Classroom work?

Each day, breakfasts are packaged in rolling insulated containers and labeled by classroom. Student helpers locate their containers by the school cafeteria and roll the containers to their classroom. Once in the classroom, each student chooses a breakfast and eats at his or her desk while the teacher takes morning attendance, does review work and reads announcements. Breakfast normally takes about ten minutes. A wet wipe is included for each student to clean their hands and desk after breakfast service. Trash is put into a large trash bag inside the classroom. Once breakfast is complete, a student helper ties up the bag and leaves it in the hallway for collection by the school custodian. A student helper then returns the rolling insulated containers to the school cafeteria. No food is left inside the classroom.

What foods are served in Breakfast in the Classroom?

Milk is served daily, as is fruit or juice. Entrees are nutritious and easy to eat quickly. Meals often include popular breakfast items such as cold cereal, bagels and string cheese. On "Hot Food Days," a hot entrée such as a breakfast egg wrap is served.

What are the advantages of Breakfast in the Classroom?

Traditional breakfast in the cafeteria does not meet the needs of many students. Less than half of the students who eat lunch at school eat breakfast at school. Research shows that students who do not eat a nourishing breakfast are not able to concentrate well, become irritable more quickly and show hunger-related symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches. *When breakfast is moved into the classroom and served to everyone, every student is able to start the school day ready to learn without hunger-related disruptions.*

Share this exciting news with your child and be ready on [*Insert Start Date Here*] for the start of this new program! As this program rolls out, we would like to hear your feedback on how it's going and areas for improvement. Please e-mail [*Insert Principal E-mail Address Here*] with any questions, comments or suggestions.

*Attachment: Breakfast in the Classroom monthly menu

24 Adapted from California Food Policy Advocates BreakfastFirst campaign. More information available at: **http://www.breakfastfirst.org/**

Letter to Parents (Spanish)[25]

Desayuno en el Salón de Clases

¡A partir del [*Insert Start Date Here*]!

Estimados padres de la [*Insert School Name Here*],

¿Con el ajetreo matutino en casa, es así que sus hijos casi no tienen tiempo de guardar la tarea en la mochila, y apenas se alimentan con un desayuno poco nutritivo? Si esto le suena familiar, le aliviará saber que ese alimento tan importante ya no será un problema.

A partir del [*Insert Start Date Here*] su hijo/a va a tomar parte en un programa innovador llamado "Desayuno en el Salón de Clases". Como el nombre lo indica, cada día escolar vamos a servir un desayuno nutritivo a cada alumno en su salón. Durante los primeros 10 minutos en el salón tendrán la oportunidad de desayunar con sus compañeros y obtener la energía necesaria en la mañana para que estén listos para aprender. El desayuno sigue siendo GRATUITO. Ya no se servirá en el patio de la cafetería antes del horario de clases.

El impacto directo del desayuno en el rendimiento académico ha sido muy bien estudiado, y nos complace trabajar con el Departamento de Servicios Alimenticios para traerle esta novedad comprobada e influenciar al máximo el aprendizaje en el salón.

¿Cómo funciona?

Los desayunos se empacan diariamente en contenedores aislados rodantes y etiquetados para cada salón. Los alumnos designados localizan sus contenedores en el patio de la cafetería, los llevan rodando a su salón y los alimentos en charolas se distribuyen en cada uno de los mesa-bancos. Los niños desayunan mientras el maestro pasa lista de asistencia, verifica el trabajo y lee los anuncios. Esto normalmente toma como 10 minutos. Se incluye una toalla húmeda para que cada alumno limpie las manos y el mesa-banco antes de que comiencen las clases. La basura se deposita en un contenedor con ruedas dentro del salón. Los alumnos amarran la bolsa con la basura, la dejan en el depósito y la ruedan al exterior del salón. Los alumnos regresan los contenedores aislados rodantes a la cocina. No se dejan alimentos dentro del salón de clases.

¿Cuáles comidas se sirven en el Desayuno en el Salón de Clases?

Diariamente se servirá leche igual que jugo o una fruta. Los platillos son nutritivos y fáciles de comer rápidamente. Se incluyen alimentos populares para el desayuno tales como cereales fríos, "bagels", y queso en tiritas. En "Los Días de Comida Caliente" incluimos un platillo caliente, como por ejemplo un burrito de huevo.

¿Cuáles son las ventajas del Desayuno en el Salón de Clases?

El desayuno tradicional en la cafetería no cumple las necesidades de muchos niños. Menos de la media parte de los alumnos que toman su almuerzo en la escuela también desayunan en la escuela. Es comprobado que los alumnos que no se alimentan con un desayuno nutritivo no se pueden concentrar bien, se irritan más rápidamente y muestran síntomas relacionados con el hambre, tales como dolores de cabeza y de estómago. ***Cuando se sirve el desayuno en el salón a todos alumnos, cada alumno puede comenzar el día listo para aprender y seguir durante toda la mañana sin las perturbaciones relacionadas con el hambre.***

¡Comparta estas noticias emocionantes con su hijo/a y prepárese a partir del [*Insert Start Date Here*] para comenzar este nuevo programa! Mientras este programa desarrolla, quisiéramos oír sus observaciones sobre cómo anda y las áreas de mejorar. Por favor manda un email a [*Insert Principal E-mail Address Here*] con cualquier preguntas, comentarios o sugerencias.

*Accesorio: Desayuno En El Salon De Clases

25 Adapted from California Food Policy Advocates BreakfastFirst campaign. More information available at: **http://www.breakfastfirst.org/**

Letter to Principal or Superintendent

Dear Principal/Superintendent:

Did you know that school breakfast can play a significant role in shaping the learning environment? Numerous studies have found that eating breakfast at school is linked to improvements in math, reading and vocabulary, improved standardized test scores, increased alertness and concentration, improved behavior and decreases in student absenteeism and tardiness. The good news is that the School Breakfast Program is available and ready to feed all students at [*Insert School/District Name Here*] a healthy breakfast every day.

Unfortunately, a relatively small percentage of children take advantage of this morning meal. In fact, nationwide less than half of low-income students who eat school lunch are eating school breakfast. Participation data from [*Insert School/District Name Here*] indicates that your [*School/District*] has a significant gap between breakfast and lunch participation, where only [XX]% of low-income students who participate in National School Lunch Program are participating in the School Breakfast Program.

There are several alternative breakfast models your [*School/District Name Here*] can implement to increase student participation in the School Breakfast Program, including: breakfast in the classroom, grab n' go breakfast from carts in the hallway, "second chance" breakfast after 1st period, and breakfast vending, among others. These models can be implemented with little cost to your existing food service program.

While no method is applicable to all schools and grade levels, several common themes exist in schools that most successfully increase School Breakfast Program participation, including serving breakfast at no charge and including breakfast as part of the school day.

As a [*Principal/Superintendent*], your leadership and commitment to make breakfast an essential part of the day will play an important role in your [*School/District's Name Here*] success story. I encourage you to read through the enclosed ***"Start School with Breakfast"*** guide to learn more and speak to your district's Food Service Director to find out about which alternative meal service options may work for your school

Sincerely,

Name
Title/Organization
Phone/E-mail address

Letter to School Staff

Dear [*Insert School Name Here*] staff:

Hunger in the classroom is very real. According to a survey by the anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength, over half of teachers in urban and rural districts report buying food for students at least a few times each month, meaning that many students are not getting the nutrition they need to learn throughout the day. Why is this important? Research shows that hungry children do not perform as well academically, are more likely to have behavioral and attention problems, and are more likely to be absent and tardy from school.

[*Insert School Name Here*] is committed to helping hungry kids be better prepared to learn at school. As part of this effort, beginning on [*Insert Date Here*], [*Insert School Name Here*] will begin serving Breakfast in the Classroom to all students. Eating breakfast at school is proven to help improve students' academic performance, behavior and health and moving breakfast from the cafeteria into the classroom and serving it after the opening bell is the single best way to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program.

Teachers and paraeducators are important partners of the Breakfast in the Classroom program, and we want to make this transition as seamless as possible for you. Below is information about your responsibility as part of this new program and a sample daily timeline. A Breakfast in the Classroom training will also be offered on [*Insert Date Here*].

Teacher/Paraeducator Responsibility

- Complete the daily accountability roster by checking off the names of those students who take a complete breakfast (entrée, fruit/fruit juice and milk).
- While students eat breakfast, teachers are encouraged to complete administrative functions (check in library books, take attendance) discuss plans for the day, or lead an educational activity [*enclose "Ideas for educators: Student Activities for Breakfast Time" booklet*].
- Supervise students as they dispose of breakfast trash in the trash bag (provided to your classroom each morning) and place the trash bag and breakfast delivery equipment in the hallway outside the classroom when breakfast is finished.
- Enjoy a FREE breakfast each morning, complements of [*Insert School Name Here*]

Recommended Timeline for Breakfast in the Classroom

7:45 am	Student helpers or cafeteria staff pick up pre-packed insulated bags from cafeteria and deliver to assigned classrooms
8:00 am	Teachers pick-up students from their designated waiting locations and walk to classroom
8:05 am	Students enter classroom, put away book bags/jackets and proceed to a designated classroom area to take the days breakfast offerings (entrée, fruit/fruit juice and milk); students return to their desks and eat breakfast Teachers or paraprofessionals complete the accountability roster as students are taking meals
8:15 am	Students dispose of trash in provided double-lined trash bags and place trash bag in the hallway for pickup by custodial staff. Students return unopened leftover food to the insulated bags. Insulated bags and accountability rosters are placed in the hallway for pickup by food service staff or returned to the cafeteria by student helpers.
8:20 am	Regular classroom activities commence!

As this is a new program at [*Insert School Name Here*], we ask that all teachers try Breakfast in the Classroom for one month, at which point we will consider discontinuation of the program on a case by case basis if you are dissatisfied. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [*Insert E-mail, Phone Number Here*].

Success Stories

Success Stories

Parents

As a parent, I see many positive aspects to the Breakfast in the Classroom program. I get a chance to stay in the classroom for a short time in the morning and I have witnessed what responsibility and community this program is building. My daughter's teacher is also using this program as a learning tool; each morning they briefly talk about why breakfast is important to health and well-being.
~Parent, Adrian Public Schools, Adrian, Michigan

Principals

While the students are being served [breakfast], I turn on the intercom and give the students a motivational thought for the day and I play a motivational song appropriate for the students and staff (i.e., Hero, When You Believe, I Believe I Can Fly). It has caught on so much so, that teachers and students have begun sending [song] suggestions. Also, if a day is missed, I receive text messages/e-mails asking if everything is okay.
~Principal, Memphis City Schools, Memphis, Tennessee

Teachers and Education Support Professionals

In the month since we began Breakfast in the Classroom, I have seen beneficial changes in my students. They enjoy sharing a meal together in their classroom and have developed a routine. Together we have worked to develop the appropriate manners for eating. The mid-morning drag and complaints about being hungry between arriving at school and lunch has drastically decreased. The students, parents, and staff are grateful for BIC and all those who helped make it a reality.
~Teacher, Little Rock School District, Little Rock, Arkansas

The breakfast routine is developed individually by each teacher. In the classroom I work in, the teacher selects two students each week to take the insulated breakfast cooler and trash bag to the lunch lady after breakfast. A new helper is chosen each week so everyone gets to be a part of the job.
~Paraeducator, Pueblo City Schools, Pueblo Colorado

Our school has been doing "Grab and Go" breakfasts to increase our breakfast participation for a long time. Each year the lunchroom staff adjusts it to make it even more successful. This year the lunchroom manager has a cart at the front door to catch students as they come in. Then they go directly to the classroom. If the student is running a little late, they can make it to the room before the tardy bell and still get a nutritious breakfast. It has been really successful.
~Paraeducator, Whitfield County School District, Whitfield County, Georgia

Teachers and Education Support Professionals (continued)

Teachers and students alike like the [Breakfast in the Classroom] program. Teachers have commented how more wide awake and attentive students are after they have breakfast. Even students have said they are more awake if they have something to eat before starting their studies. The teachers in the classrooms I have been in give instruction as the students eat and no class instruction time is lost. I think this is a very good program that should be kept going in schools across the U.S.

~Paraeducator, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

My Pre-K students have adjusted well to grab and go. [In the beginning] I had parents help with the transition so that we could be in the classroom to help meet the students; my classroom is far away from the cafeteria and I wanted to make sure that they could make it through the breakfast line and to my room with food in hand. I love having bathrooms and a sink in my room. The students can set their breakfast down on the table and go wash hands. When they are done, they can dump extra milk or juice in the sink before they throw the trash away. [To help keep students occupied during breakfast time] we provide a shelf with fine motor toys on it. The students who are not eating can take a toy and start playing. The students who are eating can get one off of the shelf when they are finished. I also play a good morning song so that all the students know when it is time to clean up.
~Teacher, Omaha Public Schools, Omaha, Nebraska

I feel that overall Breakfast in the Classroom has been a positive experience. My students are getting to my classroom more quickly in the morning. It is taking them less time to get their morning work completed because they are starting sooner. The students can be monitored better in the classroom than in the lunchroom. In the lunchroom there were always so many students and not enough staff, the students spent much of the breakfast time playing.

It was a bit difficult in the beginning to work out the logistics of how it would work best in my classroom. Some of the children were struggling to get backpacks off and take care when they had breakfast in their hand. I learned to first have the students set their breakfast on their desk, and then to go take care of their backpacks. We saw less accidents and problems this way! Once we found a system that worked well for my classroom, things went much more smoothly.

[To keep students occupied] I always have bell work on the board and ready for the class every morning. The students have been smoothly transitioning from finishing breakfast to getting right to work! I also see a lot of my students looking over their bell work and thinking about the strategies they will use to complete their work while eating breakfast. It is also nice to hear students talking about bell work with other students around them. [Breakfast in the Classroom] works well to "gently" slide the students into classroom thinking mode after being out of school.
~Teacher, Omaha Public Schools, Omaha, Nebraska

Teachers and Education Support Professionals (continued)

Participation in the School Breakfast Program is important—primarily as a way to help meet the nutritional needs of students, but also to help schools receive maximum reimbursement and run a successful program. Anchorage School District Student Nutrition presently has four schools participating in the "Breakfast in the Classroom" program. All four of these elementary schools are also Provision 3, which means that all the students are able to participate in the program for no meal cost. The program is in the second year at one school and in the first year at the other three schools. Time is showing that students who eat breakfast tend to perform better on exams. Improved attendance among students who take advantage of breakfast in the classroom is another positive reality. There are definitely less trips to the nurse's office. Breakfast in the Classroom service is not without its challenges to orchestrate (i.e., accountability, occasional food spills); however these challenges do not outweigh the strong advantages of Breakfast in the Classroom.
~Student Nutrition Coordinator, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska

In a short amount of time after implementing [Breakfast in the Classroom in my second-grade classroom], attendance rates were up, tardiness was down, and visits to the nurse for a stomach- or headache were nonexistent. The whole thing took about 10 minutes each morning and was an excellent way to build community, discuss food etiquette and learn about healthy foods. If you organize it and manage it well, it isn't a huge distraction, it's a godsend.
~Teacher, San Diego Unified School District, San Diego, California

For more information about these and other success stories contact:

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Share Our Strength
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Lisa Sharma
Senior Program Coordinator
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In an evaluation of a three-year universal pilot breakfast program in Minnesota, teachers reported that students were more attentive and complained of headaches and hunger less; and, on average, reports for discipline and visits to school nurse decreased. [26]

26 School Breakfast Programs: Energizing the Classroom, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, Minneapolis, MN

NEA Health Information Network

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WeightWatchers® *This guide was made possible by generous support from Weight Watchers' "Lose for Good" campaign.*