

Breakfast



Objective

The nutritional quality and variety of food served for school breakfast will be improved.



Key Messages

Skipping breakfast compromises a child's ability to learn.

- Skipping breakfast is associated with slower memory recall, poorer cognitive functioning and lower ability to differentiate among visual images among students.¹⁻²
- Children who experience hunger score lower in math and are more likely to repeat a grade, while teens who experience hunger are more likely to have difficulty getting along with others and to be suspended from school.³

Breakfast readies the mind for learning and contributes to academic achievement.

- Breakfast consumption is associated with improved cognitive functioning, attention and memory. Eating breakfast close to the time of class has stronger associations with standardized test performance compared to skipping breakfast or eating at home.⁴⁻⁵
- Breakfast in the classroom has been shown to reduce tardy rates and disciplinary referrals, while breakfast at school increases attendance rates.⁶⁻⁷

Breakfast contributes to improved dietary intake and reduced risk of obesity.

- Students who consume breakfast at school are more likely to meet or exceed dietary intake of important vitamins and minerals.⁸⁻¹⁰
- School breakfast availability is associated with fewer visits to the school nurse.¹¹
- Participation in the school breakfast program is associated with lower rates of overweight and obesity.¹²⁻¹³

School breakfast can help your school's bottom line.

- Using creative strategies to help make breakfast part of your school day and increasing breakfast participation rates among students can lead to increased revenue of \$1-\$1.50 per child per day. Some districts increase participation by offering free universal breakfast to students, regardless of student income, to ensure consistent reimbursement rates.¹⁴
- Because school breakfast is associated with increased average attendance, your school may see an increase Average Daily Attendance (ADA)-related funding for uses outside the lunchroom as well. ¹⁴





Key Strategies

- **Grab 'n Go:** Healthy and appealing breakfast items including low-fat milk, fresh fruit and whole grains conveniently packaged so students can quickly and easily grab food, from either the cafeteria, carts or kiosks, which are conveniently located near school entrances.
- **Breakfast in the classroom or Second Chance breakfast:** Students eat breakfast in their classroom either at the beginning of the school day or after 1st period. Students eat at their desks in a short period of time during attendance and announcements or while teachers read aloud. Alternatively, the second chance option allows students to go into the cafeteria after class begins, bring breakfast into the classroom, or pick up breakfast from carts in the hallway from school nutrition personnel.
- **Universal breakfast:** All students in the school are offered breakfast at no charge. This strategy has been shown to have the most impact on increasing breakfast participation, and makes the most business sense when used in a school with high rates of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- **Promote your breakfast program:** Good promotion increases participation. Host a breakfast kick-off event and invite parents to come and enjoy a simple, healthy breakfast with their student. Offer the opportunity to sign up the child for the breakfast program.
 - Involve students in choosing new menu items by gathering their feedback on the breakfast foods they enjoy, which will also help to ensure ethnic recipes are taken into consideration. Other ways to engage students include holding taste testings of new breakfast options and utilizing students when marketing these new items on the line (e.g., offering samples to fellow students).
 - Generate excitement about your breakfast program through posters or signage, morning announcements, newsletters to parents, and e-mails to teachers and principals. (See sample templates in resources folder.)
- **Write a breakfast mini-grant:** A grant can be used to help cover start-up costs of an alternative breakfast program. Fuel up to Play 60 and General Mills offer periodic opportunities for grants to cover breakfast equipment and supplies.



Sample Policy Language

“The district shall provide school breakfasts and lunches that exceed the nutritional standards required by the USDA School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs to encourage the consumption of nutrient-dense foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables.”

“Students will be provided adequate time (minimum of 10 minutes) to eat breakfast in a pleasant dining environment.”

“Schools will, to the extent possible, arrange bus schedules and utilize methods to serve school breakfasts that encourage participation, including serving breakfast in the classroom, “grab-and-go” breakfast- or breakfast during morning break or recess.”¹⁵

“Schools that serve breakfast to students will notify parents and students of the availability of the School Breakfast Program.”²

“Schools will encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast for their children through newsletter articles, take-home materials, or other means.”¹⁵



Success Stories

Sioux Trail Elementary School, ISD 191, Burnsville, MN

“Breakfast Bucks” program – Increased breakfast consumption by 23%.

To encourage more students to eat breakfast, staff at Sioux Trail Elementary launched a “Breakfast Bucks” program. Students who ate breakfast earned 1 Breakfast Buck. The promotion increased the number of breakfasts served over five weeks by 480, which was a 23% increase. At the end of the 5th week, students could buy a chance to have breakfast with the principal or other school staff. The best part was the breakfast was planned for the school roof! Six lucky students dined al fresco with Principal Akin, the police liaison and their favorite custodian. Students were able to purchase homework passes, making them able to buy out of one homework assignment. After the promotion ended, the number of breakfast consumers remained high.

Henry Sibley High School, ISD 197, West Saint Paul, MN

Smoothie Fridays – Increased breakfast consumption by 24%.

Since the introduction of Smoothie Fridays at Henry Sibley High School, an average of 213 smoothies are whipped up and served to teens in the early morning hours. The available smoothie flavors, strawberry and strawberry banana (known as the “Official Sibley Smoothie” due to its red and gold fruits), were chosen based on student taste test results from last semester and input from high school students that attended a district wellness committee meeting last spring. The 16 oz. smoothies, loaded with fruit and low-fat milk, are sold as part of a reimbursable meal. And not only do they taste great, but they’ve increased participation in the breakfast program by 24% on Smoothie Fridays. What a treat!

Saint Paul Public Schools

Breakfast to Go (B2G) program

Click [here](#) to watch a short video clip on how the B2G program successfully operates in 50 elementary and secondary schools every day! Since program initiation, program participation has increased from 38% to 69%.



Resources for Implementation

- **School Breakfast Waste Reduction strategies (including breakfast in the classroom):**
<https://www.illinois.gov/gov/green/Documents/Go%20Green%20Symposium%20breakfast%20waste%20reduction%20presentation%204.13.12.pdf>
- **Breakfast for Healthy Kids:** A number of resources your school can use when implementing a breakfast program. It offers webinars, success stories, grant opportunities, and additional research.
<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/what-we-do/breakfast-for-healthy-kids#BenefitsSchoolBreakfast>
- **Breakfast in the Classroom:** A toolkit to help schools find the breakfast program that works with their school. It also provides answers to FAQs school personnel ask when implementing school breakfast.
http://neahealthyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/bic_toolkit_final_2014-for-web_reduced.pdf
- **BreakfastFirst:** Stay up –to-date on the latest funding opportunities, learn the variety of ways breakfast can be served in schools, and stay current on emerging research surrounding school breakfast. <http://www.breakfastfirst.org/>
- **USDA’s Discover Breakfast Toolkit:** For individuals who have an interest in increasing access to the School Breakfast Program. It will assist with determining the type of meal service best suited to the school, can provide a marketing plan for promotion, and even includes an evaluation tool. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/discover-school-breakfast-toolkit>
- **Food Research and Action Center (FRAC):** FRAC provides current research surrounding school breakfast.
<http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-program/>
- **On, Wisconsin! Breakfast Menus:** This includes a menu planning worksheet, production records, a weekly nutrient calculator, and a menu workbook for breakfast. http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_wicyclenmenu2#k12
- **Breakfast Bulletin Board Resources:** Create a breakfast bulletin board using these free resources.
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/boiulletin-board-resources/breakfast-bulletin-board-resources>

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Smart Choices is a partnership of the Dakota County Public Health Department and school districts in Dakota County committed to making the healthy choice the easy choice by creating opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity before, during and after school.

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