



Breakfast in the Classroom

Serving breakfast at the beginning of the school day dramatically increases participation by making it convenient and accessible to all, no matter how students arrive at school. For instance, it eliminates the barrier often caused by tight bus schedules. Service options include breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go” breakfast service from carts or kiosks set up in school hallways or cafeterias, and breakfast after first period in middle and high schools.

It Works Best When Breakfast is Free to All

- Offering breakfast at no charge to all students, often called “universal”, helps remove the stigma for low-income children of participation in school breakfast.
- Studies show that schools that offer a breakfast free to all students increase student participation.
- Programs that provide breakfast in the classroom after school starts have the highest participation rates.

Breakfast in the Classroom Improves Student Achievement, Diets and Behavior

- Schools that offer breakfast in the classroom report decreases in discipline and psychological problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments.
- Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- Students attending schools that offer breakfast free to all students are more likely to consume a nutritionally substantive breakfast and to consume significantly more calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, fruit, and dairy products at breakfast, when compared to students from schools with a traditional school breakfast program.



Breakfast in the Classroom: Promising Practices

D. C. Public Schools: Impact of the Healthy Schools Act

The District of Columbia is the first city to legislate breakfast in the classroom, through its Healthy Schools Act. All elementary schools with more than 40 percent of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals (most of the schools meet this criterion) must serve breakfast in the classroom. All middle and high schools with more than 40 percent of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals must serve breakfast either in the classroom or through another alternative such as "grab and go". In the 66 D.C. Public School elementary schools with some form of breakfast in the classroom, 77 percent of students were eating breakfast on average each day in the first half of school year 2011-2012 — an increase of six percentage points from school year 2010-2011 and 30 percentage points from school year 2009-2010. DC Hunger Solutions' report of the school year 2010-2011 data is available at www.dchunger.org/pdf/dc_classroom_breakfast_2010-2011report.pdf.



Houston Independent School District: "First Class Breakfast" District-Wide

The "First Class Breakfast" program, started in September 2006 as a pilot program in 20 schools, now gives all K – 8 students the option of having their morning meal at their desks at the beginning of each school day. The meals are free to all students, and are available in all Houston elementary and middle schools as of Fall 2010. The program features a delivery method that is quick – designed to take no more than 15 minutes for the entire process. As soon as the first bell rings, a cafeteria staff member delivers individual breakfasts to students at each classroom door. Insulated service carts help ensure that hot food stays hot and cold food stays cold. As a result of the program, the participation rate in breakfast went from approximately 45 percent in 2006 to the current 79 percent in 2011.



Memphis City Schools: Leveraging Partnerships

Memphis increased breakfast participation by more than 3,000 students per day in school year 2010-11 through effective implementation of breakfast in the classroom. With support from the Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom Project, funded by the Walmart Foundation, the district was able to implement breakfast in the classroom in 20 schools. This partnership helped bring together all major stakeholders in the district – administrators, principals, teachers, custodians and parents - to build a strong breakfast in the classroom program. All students are offered the breakfast option regardless of income. Each morning, food is delivered to classrooms before the teacher takes attendance. Children have a choice of a hot item, like a sausage and whole grain biscuit, or a cold item, such as yogurt and granola. Memphis Schools' dietitian Kim Stewart says, "The teachers are saying the students are more focused, and more children are getting there on time so they can eat breakfast." The district is expanding the program in 2011-2012, with a goal of doubling the number of schools participating.