



WHAT IS THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?

School Breakfast, established in 1975, is a federal meals program through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and implemented through Maine Department of Education that provides cash subsidies for each meal served. School Breakfasts must meet the meal pattern and nutrition standards set forth by the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

While most schools in Maine serve breakfast, our state only has a breakfast participation rate of 40% which leaves \$81,558 a day or \$13,864,860 a year of available federal reimbursements on the table.

This also means that 51,923 kids who are eligible for free breakfast are not getting it.

Maine has the highest rate of hunger in New England and the 3rd highest rate of hunger in the U.S. One out of four Maine kids experience food insecurity. We can do better and School Breakfast is an important first step!

BREAKFAST AND HEALTH

- Eating breakfast regularly has been linked with greater intake of fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin C, and other vitamins and minerals, and lower intake of fat, cholesterol and sodium
- Access to school breakfast decreases the risk of marginal food insecurity and breakfast skipping, especially for low-income children
- Children who participate in school breakfast are more likely to consume fruit and milk
- Low-income children who eat school breakfast have significantly better overall diet quality than low-income students who do not eat school meals
- School breakfast participation is associated with a lower body index (BMI), lower probability of overweight and lower probability of obesity

BREAKFAST AND LEARNING

- Students who eat breakfast on average attend 1.5 more days of school per year and score 17.5% higher on math tests
- Children who eat breakfast at school perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home
- Providing breakfast to students at school proves their

- concentration, alertness, comprehension, memory and learning
- Providing students with breakfast in the classroom setting is associated with lower tardy rates and fewer disciplinary office referrals
- Children who skip breakfast are less able to differentiate among visual images, show increased errors and have slower memory recall

SO, WHY AREN'T MAINE KIDS EATING BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL?

Many Maine schools serve traditional breakfast, or breakfast served before the first class of the day in the school cafeteria. Participation in this form of breakfast service tends to be low due to several factors such as the stigma associated with eating free or reduced meals or not wanting to miss out on socialization or play time.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION?

The best way to serve students breakfast depends on many factors including your cafeteria size, the size of your school and the number of food service staff. It is important to use this information in order to facilitate a discussion with various school stakeholders regarding the most effective option for your school environment.

- **Universal Breakfast:** Breakfast is served free to all students regardless of their eligibility for free or reduced meals.
 - Benefits: reduces the stigma associated with eating free school meals, increases equity by insuring every student has access to a healthy meal to start their day, reduces financial strain and burden on families
 - Challenges: may not be financial viable for all schools & school districts, especially if the school has low enrollment in free or reduced meals
- **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Students are served breakfast in the classroom during the first few minutes of class.
 - Benefits: reduces stigma associated with eating school meals, affords teachers the opportunity to model healthy & positive eating habits, increases student readiness to learn, students do not have to leave class if they arrive at school too late to eat before class
 - Challenges: increased food staff and custodial staff time

SCHOOL BREAKFAST








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may be needed for packaging delivery and clean up, coolers/cooler bags needed to keep breakfast items at food safe temperatures, teacher cooperation needed for logging breakfasts eaten & for allowing eating in their classroom, time for clean up

- **Grab and Go Breakfast:** Breakfasts are pre-bagged and students can pick them up from the cafeteria or a kiosk in the hallway on their way to class. Students eat these breakfasts during class.
 - **Benefits:** students who don't arrive to school in time to eat breakfast before class can still eat, teachers don't need to do any record keeping because students pick up the breakfast outside of the classroom
 - **Challenges:** coolers/cooler bags needed to keep cold items cold if kiosks are outside of the cafeteria, buy-in required from food service workers and custodial staff
- **Expanding Cafeteria Hours:** The hours of the school cafeteria are extended throughout the morning and students can obtain a pass from a teacher, school administrator, nurse, etc. to go pick up a breakfast to either eat in the cafeteria or the classroom.
 - **Benefits:** few, if any, changes needed to food service workers schedules, students can eat breakfast whenever they are hungry, teachers can send a student to get a breakfast whenever they notice any of symptoms of hunger, no additional resources needed to institute the program
 - **Challenges:** food service workers may need to step away from lunch prep to ring out students, may need to add additional staff hours, buy-in needed from teachers & staff so that they will distribute passes to students

THE RESULTS!

-  Lincoln Middle School teachers reported a decrease in visits to the nurse after implementing Breakfast in the Classroom.
-  Kaler Elementary teachers report on Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) found
 - **100%** state BIC has a positive impact on attendance
 - **93%** state BIC reduces hunger in their classroom
 - **80%** state BIC improves attentiveness among students
-  Lake Region Middle School increased participation from 60 to 200+ students daily after adopting Breakfast After the Bell.
-  Molly Ockett Middle School adopted Breakfast After the Bell and doubled breakfast numbers, now serving breakfast to 60-70 students daily.
-  Guy E. Rowe adopted Breakfast in the Classroom and now serves 100 additional students daily.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Full Plates Full Potential advocates for sustainable, systemic solutions to end child hunger. To improve access to school breakfast in your area email us at info@fullplates.org.