

BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



A TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS

Under Maine law, a school administrative unit with a public school in which at least 50% of students qualified for a free or reduced-price school meal during the preceding school year is required to serve breakfast after the start of the school day and qualifies for state funding.

Learn more at:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition/programs/breakfast>

Any school not eligible for state funding to support breakfast after the bell is encouraged to apply for a Full Plates Breakfast Grant.

Learn more at:

<https://www.fullplates.org/grants/school-breakfast-grant-program/>

BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL

Principals



WHAT?

Breakfast will include a wide variety of nutritious food choices that not only meet USDA nutrition guidelines, but also are delicious foods that kids will eat!



WHEN?

Usually within the first 10-15 minutes of class ([see list of models to make this happen](#)).

1

WHY?

Studies show that students who eat breakfast are more likely to perform better on tests, attendance is better, less disruption in the classrooms and graduation rates are higher.



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WHERE?

Breakfast will be part of the school day and available to all students by offering it in the classrooms.

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WHO?

Breakfast will be available for ALL students!

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Principals

WHY?

Participation in school breakfast programs has traditionally been very low due to barriers such as parents or busses dropping students off too late, students not knowing about school breakfast, students choosing to socialize with friends, or the stigma of sitting in the cafeteria to eat. Recognizing the connection between school breakfast and academic achievement and behavior problems, policy makers across the country are rethinking how and where breakfast is served. The goal is to close the participation gap and ensure kids have the nutrition they need to succeed. As an added benefit, many teachers and principals cite breakfast in the classroom as an opportunity to incorporate social and emotional learning for younger students into the school day. Sharing a meal together in the classroom also reduces the stigma associated with school breakfast for low-income children and provides social bonding time for students and teachers.

WHAT?

School Nutrition Programs and food vendors work together to find breakfast foods that kids like and that meet strict USDA nutritional guidelines. These include breakfast sandwiches, pancakes, muffins, breakfast bars, cereal choices, yogurt, fruit, milk, and lots more. Your school nutrition staff will likely distribute a breakfast menu. We want kids to look forward to eating their morning meal at school!

WHERE?

Students may pick up a grab 'n go type breakfast in the cafeteria, then head to the classroom or it may be delivered to them by School Nutrition Staff on a cart. It can also be a kiosk in the hallway that students go to on their way to class. Middle and High School students may have a different breakfast model called "Second Chance Breakfast" depending on class schedule. Students will eat at their desks with their classmates and teacher.

WHEN?

For older students, if the school opts for the model, "Second Chance Breakfast" it happens after the first period where students get their meal and either eat it in their second period classroom, or if time permits, in the cafeteria. For Breakfast after the Bell, students eat during the first 10-15 minutes of class. Depending on individual school or teacher daily schedule, this may be during morning announcements or while the teacher takes attendance, checks homework, or reviews lessons. Some teachers also use breakfast in the classroom as a means to teach valuable nutrition lessons or incorporate breakfast into reading, science, or math lessons.

WHO?

Breakfast is available to ALL students. The National School Breakfast Program is a federal school nutrition program, just like school lunch. Meals are made affordable for all students through subsidies and reimbursements provided by the federal government. If a child gets free or reduced priced meals they will get free breakfast. If a child pays full price for meals they will pay full price (usually around \$1.50) for breakfast. The money will come out of their school meal account. Students will either enter their PIN like they do at lunch, or be checked off. No money passes at breakfast and there is no outward identification of meal status. That is why it is important to urge the parents of your students to fill out and return the free/reduced price Meal Application that they receive at the beginning of the school year. The applications are available at any time during the school year, as well. Help to do everything you can to assure healthy meals for kids at school!

MYTHS

Breakfast after the Bell takes away from instructional time.

Some teachers report that they GAIN instructional time due to fewer behavioral disruptions, visits to the school nurse, tardiness and absenteeism. In fact Breakfast in the Classroom has been shown to increase student scores on standardized math and reading tests, particularly in vulnerable populations, proving that when students aren't focused on hunger pangs, they can concentrate on the lessons being taught in the classroom. (*)

It places an unnecessary burden on teachers

Many teachers spend hundreds of dollars yearly of their own money to feed hungry kids in their classroom. BAB alleviates this burden. Studies show that BAB improves student's behavior, particularly students' level of respect and preparedness for class, which means teachers can spend more time teaching and less time disciplining students. (*)

The food is unhealthy

School breakfast is healthier than most people realize. School breakfast must provide $\frac{1}{4}$ of the RDA for many nutrients and there are tight restrictions on calories, saturated fats and sodium. Breakfast grain products are whole grain rich, milk is skim or 1% fat, juice may be offered but cannot exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ cup and the other fruit servings must be either fresh, frozen, dried or canned in water or light syrup. (*)

School Breakfast-Healthier Than You Think

HOW CAN I HELP?

- Brainstorm with faculty and staff at staff meeting to get input from them on how they think this will work.
- Promote Breakfast after the Bell with teachers and staff by stressing the positive outcomes of students when they start their school day with a nutritious breakfast.
- Visit the classrooms when children are eating to show your support.

The Connection Between Food Insecurity, the Federal Nutrition Programs, and Student Behavior

Breakfast for Learning

The Impact of Breakfast After the Bell

TESTIMONIALS

“The Breakfast Cart is a welcoming sight at NMS. Always festively decorated and serving students with a smile! It helps to provide all students with the fuel for learning first thing in the morning.”

Melinda Luders, Vice Principal, Noble Middle School

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“We have students eating who never used to eat. ODR's (Office Disciplinary Referrals) are way down which I believe is because of the sense of community we encourage as students eat their breakfast. It is a great way to have students start their day with full bellies. Many of our students were arriving to school with junk food to eat for breakfast and the behavior that followed was a result of this. A challenge that we had was teacher buy in but after the first day we had all the teachers bought in as they saw the difference in their students almost immediately.”

Patricia Metta, Principal, Chelsea Elementary School

“My elementary school has been serving free breakfast for several months now, and across the board we love it. Students are able to come in and eat family-style in the lower grades, which gives them time to connect with their peers and teachers. It also gives them all an equal chance to start the day with a healthy meal. Students report that they are happy to get food at school because they didn't like to ride the bus right after eating at home. Teachers are happy that all of their students are starting the day this way as it results in happier, calmer students who can focus on their work. We are thrilled to participate in this program.”

Heather Wilson, Principal, Windsor Elementary School

For more information and assistance with your program contact:

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