



SCHOOL BREAKFAST OUTSIDE THE CAFETERIA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Breakfast has been offered in the cafeteria for years and hardly any of the students participate. Why does serving breakfast outside of the cafeteria increase participation?

It may be difficult to attract students to a cafeteria-based breakfast program due to bus schedules and drop off times. The buses may not arrive in time. 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. Unfortunately, there is still a potential stigma that students who are low-income are eating school breakfast in the cafeteria, which keeps many students away, regardless of their socioeconomic level. When breakfast is served outside the cafeteria, students see others eating breakfast so they naturally join in.

What kinds of increases are realized when breakfast is expanded outside of the cafeteria?

Serving breakfast outside of the cafeteria into alternate serving locations significantly increases breakfast participation:

- ✓ Breakfast served in the Classroom: Yields the highest participation levels, typically doubling the current participation
- ✓ Grab 'n' Go Breakfast: Where breakfast in bags are handed out as children get off the bus or from meal carts or kiosks set up in strategic locations, generates 15-40% participation level increases
- ✓ Breakfast After 1st Period/Second Chance Breakfast: Particularly well suited for High Schools, where students are often not hungry first thing in the morning, also yields a 15-40% participation level increase

Isn't there lost instructional time in the classroom with a classroom breakfast program?

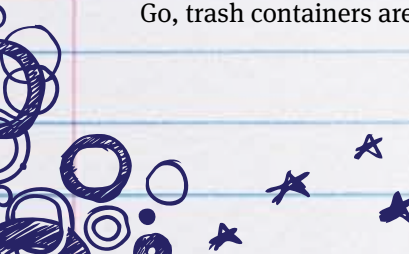
Lost instructional time is one of the greatest concerns expressed about serving breakfast in the classroom after school has started. In fact, teachers report they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer nurse visits, less tardiness and absenteeism and fewer disciplinary problems. Classroom breakfast generally takes about 10 minutes to serve and eat and is often done during morning activities, such as announcements, Daily Oral Language, individual reading time, etc., so no instructional time is lost. Often it takes time for children to settle in at the beginning of the day and many teachers find Breakfast in the Classroom to be a successful transitional activity.

Doesn't this program cost more to run?

Serving breakfast programs outside the cafeteria often cost less to run than traditional cafeteria-based breakfast programs. Labor costs may be higher, but per meal costs are lower due to increased volume and many schools generate enough money to contribute to funding lunch, purchase new equipment, etc. Also, the program has been proven to increase attendance rates, yielding higher levels of state matching funds, resulting in more funds for schools. Also, there are funding programs that can help schools purchase equipment.

Doesn't serving breakfast in the classroom or Grab 'n' Go breakfast generate a lot of trash and mess?

Trash is a frequent concern before the program begins, but schools that have introduced the program have not experienced problems. Typically breakfast foods in programs like these are easy-to-serve, easy-to-eat and easy-to-cleanup. Many school nutrition departments deliver a large trash bag with each class's breakfasts and the students throw away their own garbage. Students learn to be responsible by cleaning their desks after the meal. After the trash is collected, the bag is secured to avoid spills and placed in the hallway for custodial staff to collect. For Grab 'n' Go, trash containers are placed near the feeding site, just as you would in the cafeteria.





TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

What are the teacher benefits to having breakfast served in class?

There is well-documented research demonstrating that children who eat a nutritious school breakfast have improved classroom performance, better test scores and grades, increased ability to focus and concentrate, increased attendance and decreased disciplinary problems, tardiness and visits to the nurse. Even if there is initial resistance, the vast majority of teachers who participate in classroom breakfast programs find there are so many benefits that they would not want to stop the program.

Isn't it the responsibility of parents to prepare breakfast for their children at home?

Certainly many families still eat breakfast together at home, or prepare breakfast for their children, but with the reality of today's busy lifestyle, this is often not an option. Parents may leave for work before children get out of bed. Early bus schedules result in lack of time for eating breakfast or the need for additional food to get through the morning. Many children are not hungry when they first wake up and hunger usually kicks in after they arrive at school. Offering breakfast at school should always be a choice for students, not a requirement. Furthermore, this breakfast at school is meant as a way to support the family, not replace the family.

What is served in meals that are delivered to the classroom?

School breakfast, in or out of the cafeteria, is nutritious, meeting USDA requirements and supplying 1/4 of the recommended nutrients children need. When breakfast is served in the classroom, or as Grab 'n' Go, menus consist of breakfast foods that are easy-to-serve, easy to-eat and easy-to-cleanup. Examples of menu items are: cereal, fruit and milk; breakfast taco with turkey sausage and cheese in a whole grain tortilla with milk and fruit; a muffin, fruit-yogurt and milk.

How do you transport the meals to the classroom?

For classroom breakfast, some type of wheeled equipment is best to deliver foods. Some schools have carts in the cafeteria that can be used. Others have found that grocers will donate grocery carts. Still others use laundry baskets, trays or boxes and rolling ice chests for milk and juice for food delivery. Often, older children can be given the special job of helping with delivery, which is viewed as a positive and helps encourage responsibility. This method is especially effective if there are stairs and no elevators in your building.

If the free and reduced rate is low and breakfast cannot be served free of charge to all students, how is money collected for classroom breakfast or Grab 'n' Go Breakfast?

It is actually quite easy, as long as you have a system, which is probably already in place. Have students pre-pay on account in the cafeteria, as you are probably already doing for lunch, and that way there is no money exchanged in the classroom or hallway. If you are serving breakfast in the classroom, provide teachers with a roster and as they take attendance, teachers can check off which students take breakfast. If you are implementing a Grab 'n' Go program, have a school nutrition staff person at each station and again have them check off student names who grab a bag. Some schools even have set up Point of Sale computer systems to eliminate entering information at a later time.

