

The Universal Classroom Breakfast Expansion Act

The Universal Classroom Breakfast Expansion Act, [H.R. 4325](#), sponsored by Rep. Paul Tonko (D - NY), establishes a grant program to help schools with high numbers of low-income children establish universal classroom breakfast programs. Universal classroom breakfast – where all children eat for free and breakfast is served in the classroom – is a strategy that is proven to boost participation among low-income children. This bill would ensure that more low-income children have access to a healthy breakfast at school.

What does the Act propose?

- Sets up a competitive grant program for states that would award sub-grants to schools, targeting schools with the highest percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals;
- Allows schools to use grant money for the start-up costs associated with establishing a universal classroom breakfast program. This can include purchasing equipment, training staff, securing technical assistance, and distributing materials to encourage participation; and
- Requires schools receiving grant money to provide breakfast in the classroom free of charge to all students for at least three years.

How does classroom breakfast work?

There are several ways that children can eat breakfast in the classroom:

Breakfast in the Classroom – Breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria by students or food service staff in containers that keep dishes at the right temperature hot or cold

"Grab and Go" – All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can easily grab a reimbursable meal quickly, either from the cafeteria or from carts elsewhere on school grounds, and bring it to their classroom.

Breakfast after First Period – Usually implemented in middle and high schools, students are allowed time after their first period to obtain breakfast, either in the cafeteria or from carts in the hallway, to eat in the classroom during their second period class.

What are the benefits of universal classroom breakfast programs?

- Supports student achievement. At a time when schools are expected to raise their students' academic performance and test scores, making sure every child has had the opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast is an important but often overlooked tool. Researchers report that children who skip breakfast are less able to master the tasks necessary to do well in school.
- Improves children's health and well-being. Children who eat breakfast are significantly less likely to be overweight, while skipping breakfast is associated with a higher risk of obesity. U.S. Department of Agriculture research shows that children who participate in school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk, and eat a wider variety of foods than those who do not eat school breakfast or who have breakfast at home.
- Helps struggling families. School breakfast is a critical support to struggling families, ensuring that children receive a significant portion of the nutrition their bodies need and helping families stretch limited resources.
- Reduces stigma. Offering universal breakfast (free to all children) eliminates the perception that school breakfast is "only for poor children," which can block participation by even some of the neediest children. Serving breakfast in the classroom is proven to boost participation among low-income children.
- Strengthens school nutrition programs. Schools with large numbers of low-income children can significantly improve their bottom line by reaching more children with school breakfast; schools realize economies of scale while drawing down additional federal dollars. Funding to assist with start-up costs, which can often be a barrier to implementing classroom breakfast programs, is a solid investment and will provide long term financial stability for school nutrition programs.