



Instructional Time and Breakfast in the Classroom

School districts must provide a set amount of “instructional time” for students. The definition of instructional time varies from state to state, and even district to district. According to the Department of Education’s, Institute of Education Sciences, the definition of instructional time is simply “the portion of the school day that is allocated to instruction”. This is generally understood as time when the teacher is performing curriculum-related activities with students.

Breakfast in the classroom generally takes about 10 minutes to serve and eat, and is often done during morning activities, such as announcements, turning in homework, individual reading time, etc., so no instructional time is lost. Usually it takes time for children to settle in at the beginning of the day, and many teachers find that classroom breakfast is a successful transitional activity. Teachers report they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer nurse visits, and less tardiness and absenteeism.

Students can’t concentrate or learn when they are hungry so the time spent on eating breakfast in the classroom, and ensuring a high participation rate in this important meal, is a solid investment. Additionally, research shows that eating breakfast closer to instruction time has a greater impact on student success. Numerous studies have shown that breakfast improves learning and attendance, and reduces behavior problems and tardiness. Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.

Recognizing the importance of morning nutrition to learning and performance on standardized tests, numerous State Superintendents of Education have recently issued policy memos clarifying that classroom breakfast meets the requirements of instructional time. States that have recently taken this step include California, Indiana, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

GLOSSARY*

Allocated time: Allocated time refers to the total number of hours per year a student is required to attend school. Allocated time can then be divided into instructional and noninstructional time. (See also instructional time and noninstructional time.)

Instructional time: Instructional time refers to the portion of the school day that is allocated to instruction.

Noninstructional time: Noninstructional time refers to the portion of the school day allocated to such activities as lunch, recess, school assemblies, and other nonclassroom activities.

*From: [Institute of Education Sciences](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/glossary/n.asp), U.S. Department of Education - Glossary
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/glossary/n.asp>