

Making Breakfast Part of the School Day

What’s the Right Alternative Breakfast Service Model for my School?

Schools across the country are finding that more children start the day with school breakfast when they move it out of the cafeteria and after the first bell, making it an integral part of the school day. These new service models make breakfast participation convenient by serving it in places where children can easily access the meal — in classrooms, from hallway kiosks, or even later in the morning.

Increasing school breakfast participation can alleviate childhood hunger, improve nutrition, and ensure children have a healthy start to their day. There are a number of ways that schools can integrate breakfast into the school day to achieve that goal. The first step is for schools to evaluate what service model would work best for their students and staff.

	Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)	Grab and Go	Second Chance
Preparation and Service	School nutrition staff packs breakfasts into coolers or insulated bags to be transported to each classroom by school nutrition staff, designated students, or volunteers.	School nutrition staff packs breakfast meals in bags to be picked up from the cafeteria or kiosks in the hallway on the way to class.	Depending on the model used, students can eat in the cafeteria, similar to traditional breakfast, or take a bagged meal to be eaten in between classes or during the next period.
Timing	Students eat during the first 10–15 minutes of class during morning announcements or while the teacher takes attendance or reviews lessons.	Students pick up breakfast meals as they arrive at school and eat on the way to class or at their desks after the bell during the first 10–15 minutes of class.	Students eat after first period, during a morning nutrition break, either in the cafeteria or between classes.
Distribution of Meals	Teachers, school nutrition staff, volunteers, or students distribute meals to students at their desks or before they take their seats, and then record which, or how many, students eat breakfast.	School nutrition staff distributes meals and students are counted via the point of sale (POS) system in the cafeteria, or if using kiosks, through a wireless POS or on manual lists.	School nutrition staff distributes meals and students are counted via the POS system in the cafeteria, or if using kiosks, through a wireless POS or on manual lists.
Clean up	Students clear trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff.	Students clear trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff.	In the cafeteria, clean up is similar to traditional, before-school breakfast service. If serving from kiosks, schools should be sure to provide adequate trash cans in the hallways.
Works Best For...	BIC is ideal for lower-grade levels where children start the day in the same classroom with the same teacher each day, making delivery, counting, and claiming smoother for teachers and school nutrition staff.	“Grab and go” works well for schools that do not have the capacity to deliver food to each classroom or have infrastructure obstacles (e.g., multiple stories) that make delivery impracticable.	Second chance breakfast works particularly well for secondary schools because older students are often not hungry early in the morning and tend to arrive at school closer to the start of the school day.

Breakfast in the Classroom

Offering “breakfast in the classroom,” where meals are delivered to the classroom and students eat at their desks during the first 10–15 minutes of the school day, has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for increasing participation in the school breakfast program. 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 it Looks Like

- School nutrition staff packs breakfasts into coolers or insulated bags to be transported to each classroom. Staff often prepares in advance for the next day’s breakfast, packing non-perishable items in crates and packing milk in coolers in the walk-in refrigerator.
- Breakfast is delivered to the classroom either by school nutrition staff or designated students, and is served by the teacher or each student can pick up a meal before taking a seat at the start of the school day.
- Teachers or school nutrition staff members record which, or how many, students eat breakfast and then students eat at their desks during the first 10–15 minutes of class.
- Students eat breakfast 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.
- Students clear breakfast trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff and liquid milk can be discarded in the sink or, if there is no sink, in a designated bucket.



- Custodial staff collect the trash from the hallways after breakfast. Coolers, bags, and any left over food are picked up by school nutrition staff or returned to the cafeteria by designated students or volunteers.

Keys to Successful Implementation

- Breakfast delivery to the classroom models are often more common in elementary schools where children start the day in the same classroom with the same teacher each day, making delivery, counting, and claiming smoother for teachers and school nutrition staff.
- Delivering breakfast to the classroom requires collaboration and support from teachers, custodians, and administrators to be successful but often produces the largest gains in participation out of all of the breakfast service models. Engaging these stakeholders early in the implementation process to address possible obstacles is essential.
- The effectiveness of breakfast in the classroom is amplified when breakfast is offered free to all students regardless of income. Offering breakfast free to all students reduces stigma associated with school breakfast and increases participation which helps the school nutrition department budget.

Grab and Go Breakfast

Serving “grab and go” breakfast provides remarkable flexibility for schools. Students generally pick up a bagged breakfast meal from carts in the hallway or from the cafeteria on the way to class and eat at their desks. “Grab and go” helps schools overcome many of the barriers that keep children from participating in the traditional breakfast program that is served before the school day starts. “Grab and go,” a particularly popular model among secondary schools, helps districts overcome many of the barriers that keep children from participating in the traditional school breakfast program. “Grab and go” is an important option for schools that may find it difficult to deliver meals directly to the classroom or that prefer food service staff to manage the counting and claiming of meals.

What it Looks Like

- School nutrition staff packs breakfast meals into bags to be picked up in the cafeteria or from carts or kiosks located in the hallway or other high-traffic areas.
- Students pick up breakfast meals before the bell on the way to class.
- Students participating in breakfast are counted by school nutrition staff when the meal is picked up either through the through the point of sale (POS) system already in place in the cafeteria or using mobile POS systems or manual lists at each cart.
- Students can eat at their desks, on the way to class, or in other designated areas. Menu items are typically portable and easy to eat on the go.
- Breakfast generally takes about 10 minutes to eat once children are in their classroom, and is often done during morning activities, such as announcements, turning in homework or individual reading time so no instructional time is lost.
- When finished eating, students clear breakfast trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed

in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff and liquid milk can be discarded in the sink or, if there is no sink, in a designated bucket.

Keys to Successful Implementation

- When teachers, parents, and administrators support alternative service strategies like “grab and go,” participation can reach its full potential. Engaging these stakeholders in the implementation process to address possible obstacles is essential.
- Schools using a “grab and go” model should ensure that kiosks or service carts are strategically placed throughout the school and that there are an adequate number of trash cans to discard breakfast trash in the hallways and classrooms.
- The effectiveness of “grab and go” models is amplified when breakfast is offered free to all students regardless of income. Offering breakfast free to all students reduces stigma associated with school breakfast and increases participation which helps the school nutrition department budget.



Second Chance Breakfast

Second chance breakfast, where breakfast is served after first period, works particularly well for secondary schools because older students are often not hungry early in the morning and high school students tend to arrive at school closer to the start of the school day, leaving even less time for breakfast. Particularly in high school and middle school, social awareness and stigma associated with school breakfast can be reduced by implementing alternative service models like second chance breakfast. This model would also fit the needs of schools with later lunch periods, and if scheduled properly, offering second chance breakfast does not reduce lunch participation.

What it Looks Like

- Students arrive at school and go to first period classes. Some schools choose to serve breakfast before school as well, either in the cafeteria or from carts in the hallways.
- School nutrition staff serve breakfast after first period during a morning nutrition break or between classroom periods, either in the cafeteria or from carts in the hallway, or in other locations.
- Depending on the model used, students can eat in the cafeteria similar to traditional school breakfast or take a bagged meal to be consumed in between classes or during the next period.
- If serving breakfast from carts, students participating in breakfast are counted by school nutrition staff when the meal is picked up by using mobile point of sale systems or manual lists at each cart.
- If breakfast is served from the cafeteria, students should have enough time between classes to pick up breakfast and eat in the cafeteria.



Keys to Successful Implementation

- When teachers, parents, and administrators support second chance breakfast, the program can thrive. Engaging these stakeholders early in the implementation process to address possible obstacles is essential as some scheduling and bell time changes may be required to accommodate the program.
- Schools should offer breakfast at least two hours before lunch, typically between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m., and should ensure that students have adequate time to go to the cafeteria or cart and eat breakfast.
- Schools using a “grab and go” model should ensure that carts are strategically placed throughout the school and that there are an adequate number of trash cans to discard breakfast trash in the hallways and classrooms.
- The effectiveness of second chance breakfast and other alternative service models is amplified when breakfast is offered free to all students regardless of income. Offering breakfast free to all students reduces stigma associated with school breakfast and increases participation which helps the school nutrition department budget.