

# School Breakfast Report: Sample Format

## Introduction

Because numerous studies show that eating breakfast is essential to children's ability to learn, stay healthy, and behave in school, it is vital to monitor how well schools are doing in reaching students with school breakfast, especially low-income students whose families struggle daily with tight food budgets.

Some schools have implemented innovative breakfast programs presenting a variety of solutions to increase school breakfast participation. These schools serve as important models for other districts that lag behind in reaching low-income children with school breakfast.

## Findings

- *State Data and findings*
  - *Highlight both successful districts and those needing to increase the reach of their SBP*
  - *Include Tables, Maps, Photos*
- *Comparison to other states (FRAC National School Breakfast Scorecard)*
- *Descriptions of Successful School Breakfast Models (with quotes and pictures if possible)*

## Why Breakfast At School?

The School Breakfast Program is not only an extremely effective means to reduce hunger among low-income children; it also improves nutrition, prevents obesity, improves students' attendance, attentiveness and achievement, and reduces discipline problems in school. Studies continue to show the effectiveness of expanding school breakfast participation in improving students' nutrition, health and overall school achievement – creating a win-win situation for all. The information below presents just some of the evidence demonstrating the positive impacts of school breakfast.

### Education

Eating a healthy breakfast helps to lay the groundwork children need to learn. Numerous studies prove that nutritional status has an impact on cognitive functions in school, thus enhancing students' concentration and quality of school work. Correspondingly, the amount of time between breakfast consumption and class further impacts the level of academic achievement. Children who eat breakfast at school perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home. Providing breakfast at school benefits those students with long commutes and ensures all students are adequately prepared for school.

### Nutrition

Times have changed; busy morning schedules can make providing children a nutritious breakfast at home a challenge. All schools who participate in the School Breakfast Program must meet federal nutrition requirements, requiring breakfasts to contain no more than 30 percent of calories from fat and less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.

### Psychosocial Effects

Behavioral and emotional problems are more prevalent among children living in families where hunger is an issue. Hunger can be a huge distraction not only to a child, but for an entire class. Those who have not had breakfast find it difficult to concentrate and tend to cause classroom disruptions by compromising the focus of other classmates. School breakfast is a minor investment with a major pay-off - guaranteeing all students the opportunity to make the most of each school day.

### School Breakfast Program: The Basics

The School Breakfast Program is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and at the state level by the \_\_\_\_\_ . The federal government provides reimbursements to local school food authorities for each breakfast served.

Schools receive federal reimbursements of [*insert correct school year reimbursement rates*]:

- \$1.51 for each free breakfast served
- \$1.21 for each reduced-price breakfast served
- \$0.27 for each paid breakfast served

Schools that serve at least 40 percent free and reduced-price lunches are considered to be "severe need". Severe need schools are eligible for an additional \$0.29 in federal funding for each free or reduced-price breakfast served.

#### Who is Eligible for School Breakfast?

- Any public school, nonprofit private school or residential child care institution can choose to participate in the School Breakfast Program, which is funded through and administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and (typically) at the state level through the Department of Education.
- Any student attending a school that offers the program can eat breakfast. The amount the school is reimbursed by the federal government depends on the student's family income.
- Families must complete an application, or be "directly certified," to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Direct certification occurs for all children in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and may occur for other children who are categorically eligible-- foster, homeless, migrant, receiving TANF or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Agencies share information with schools, through data matching, to identify these children and automatically enroll them for free school meals.
- Applications divide children into one of three groups, based on their family income:
  - **Free:** Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level eat at no cost.
  - **Reduced-Price:** Children from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty level can be charged no more than 30 cents per breakfast.
  - **Paid:** Children with family incomes above 185 percent of the poverty line pay charges which are set by the school, but schools also receive a small reimbursement per meal for such children.

Some schools, however, eliminate the 30 cent copayment for children eligible for reduced-price meals or offer breakfast free to all students.

## School Breakfast Service Models

Making breakfast a part of the school day dramatically increases participation by making it convenient and accessible to all, no matter how students arrive at school. For instance, it eliminates the barrier often caused by tight bus schedules. Service options include breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go” breakfast service from carts or kiosks set up in school hallways or cafeterias, and breakfast after first period in middle and high schools. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom, the hallways, second period or on the playground, the flexibility to eat during the morning in school is essential to insure optimum participation.

Breakfast in the classroom has emerged as the most effective strategy to get school breakfast to the large number of students who need it. It is especially effective for those schools with high concentrations of free and reduced-price eligible students that can serve breakfast in the classroom to all students for free.

### Breakfast in the Classroom Improves Student Achievement, Diets and Behavior

- Schools that offer breakfast in the classroom report decreases in discipline and psychological problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments.
- Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- Students attending schools that offer breakfast free to all students are more likely to consume a nutritionally substantive breakfast and to consume significantly more calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, fruit, and dairy products at breakfast, when compared to students from schools with a traditional school breakfast program.

#### Alternative Service Methods

**Breakfast in the Classroom:** Students eat breakfast in their classrooms, either at the beginning of the school day or early during the day. Often, breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria in containers or served from carts in the hallways by food service staff.

**“Grab and Go”:** All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can easily grab a reimbursable meal quickly from the cafeteria line or from carts elsewhere on school grounds. Depending on the school’s rules, students can eat in the classroom, or somewhere else on campus.

**Breakfast after First Period or “Second Chance Breakfast”:** Usually implemented in middle and high schools, this method allows students time after their first period to obtain breakfast from the cafeteria or carts in the hallway, or to eat in the classroom or cafeteria. Computerized systems ensure that children receive only one breakfast each day.

## **School Breakfast ACTION Steps**

### **Legislators**

- Support mandates that require all schools to operate a school breakfast program.
- Support start-up grants to make it easier for schools to implement a successful program.
- Stand behind legislation for breakfast programs that serve during the school day to all students, free of charge.

### **Superintendents and Principals**

- Make breakfast a priority by requiring the School Breakfast Program in your school(s).
- Contact the district school food service director and ask what you can do to support the launch or expansion of school breakfast.
- Maintain open communication with food service employees, teachers, and parents for program feedback and modifications.
- Help promote the breakfast program to ensure all parents are informed and aware of your support for the importance of eating a nutritious breakfast each morning.

### **School Food Service Managers/Directors**

- Conduct a school or district-wide survey to assess the breakfast needs and desires of the school community.
- Implement service methods that make breakfast part of the school day.
- Consider taking advantage of Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Program to facilitate universal breakfast programs. Provision 2 allows schools with high percentages of free and reduced-price eligible students the option of providing free meals to all of their students while reducing paperwork and administrative costs.
- Promote your breakfast program throughout the school year.

### **Parents and Teachers**

- Advocate for school breakfast at your school by contacting your principal, food service director, local wellness committees, or PTA/O; share this report and personal rationale for starting or expanding a school breakfast program.
- Organize a group of school personnel, parents, physicians, or nutrition experts for a school breakfast meeting with school administrators.
- Utilize state and local anti-hunger resources to support school breakfast expansion efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Schools should make increased availability and participation in school breakfast one of their highest priorities, in order to reduce hunger and support the health and educational potential of their students, particularly low-income students. Adequate nutrition and freedom from hunger are absolutely essential for good health and academic achievement, and yet these goals are not always achievable for families which are struggling to make ends meet. Federally-funded school breakfast programs make critical nutritional contributions to children's health and education.

## **References**

*Breakfast for Learning*, FRAC

<http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>