



# Secondary School Principals' Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit

Tips and Resources for a Successful Breakfast Program

Spring 2017



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## Tips and Resources for a Successful Breakfast Program

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## About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States. For more information about FRAC or to sign up for FRAC's *Weekly News Digest* and monthly *Meals Matter: School Breakfast* newsletter, go to [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org) and select Subscribe to eNews at the top of the page. For more information about the School Breakfast Program, go to <http://bit.ly/sbprogram>.



## About NASSP

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of—and voice for—middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States and 35 countries around the world. NASSP's mission is to connect and engage school leaders through advocacy, research, education, and student programs. For more information about NASSP, please visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

## Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

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**W**elcome to the Secondary School Principals' Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit. The resources included in this toolkit are designed to assist you in working with your school nutrition department to bring “grab-and-go” breakfast, second-chance breakfast, or breakfast in the classroom programs into your school. Utilizing this toolkit will put you on the right path to increasing student participation in school breakfast, advancing student academic success, and improving your school's learning environment.

Studies have shown that offering breakfast after the bell increases participation in the school breakfast program, allowing more students to benefit from the academic and health benefits linked to participating in school breakfast. Research indicates that eating school breakfast improves students' concentration, alertness, comprehension, memory, learning, and standardized test scores.<sup>1</sup> In addition, breakfast in the classroom is associated with fewer instances of tardiness, absenteeism, and behavioral referrals.<sup>2</sup> When students have the nutrition needed to succeed, they are positioned to reach their full academic potential.

Yet, many students do not start the day with this important morning meal. According to the Food Research & Action Center's (FRAC) “School Breakfast Scorecard,” for every 100 low-income students nationally who participate in school lunch, only 56 participate in school breakfast.<sup>3</sup> Anecdotally, participation rates in school breakfast are even lower among secondary students. Barriers such as hectic morning schedules, late bus arrivals, and social stigma deter students from eating school breakfast. Breakfast after the bell programs overcome these obstacles by moving breakfast out of the cafeteria and incorporating it into the school day.

Establishing a successful breakfast after the bell program requires strong principal leadership, as principals set the school vision and cultivate staff support for the program. Principals should work closely with the school nutrition department to ensure that teachers, food service staff, and custodians are included in the planning and receive the necessary information, training, and supplies that will make breakfast after the bell a success. Additionally, principals can help sustain this success by facilitating feedback loops between faculty and school support staff and food service staff after the program's launch. This toolkit has been designed to provide resources to help principals grow and maintain support for a breakfast after the bell program. For more comprehensive, detailed information about how to integrate breakfast into the school day, please see [FRAC's School Breakfast Program webpage](#).

In this toolkit, you will find:

- **Tips for a successful program**
- **Sample outreach materials**
- **Event planning materials**

Many of the resources included are designed to be customized for your school. If you have any questions regarding how to use this toolkit or bring breakfast after the bell to your school, please contact Alison Maurice at [amaurice@frac.org](mailto:amaurice@frac.org).

# Tips for a Successful Breakfast After the Bell Program

- Work with school nutrition staff to **hold a meeting with educators, custodians, and other school personnel** to discuss why the school is seeking to change the way breakfast is served. Principals can emphasize the important role school breakfast plays in fostering a supportive learning environment. The school food service manager or director can share



what the program could look like for your school building and current participation levels. (Please see the [PowerPoint template](#).) Gather and write down initial feedback and concerns shared by staff.

- **Ask for volunteers** to assist with planning the program or organize a more formal planning committee.
  - Try to recruit a professionally diverse array of school stakeholders, such as teachers, paraprofessionals, food service workers, and custodians.
  - Charge the food service director or manager with working with the volunteer/planning committee to incorporate its recommendations into the breakfast program's logistics.



- **Offer breakfast at no cost to all students** if possible, as this removes the stigma associated with participating in school breakfast. Many high-poverty schools find it financially feasible to provide breakfast at no cost to all students. Talk with your food service director to see what options are available for your school.



- In partnership with your school nutrition department, **ensure the final plan for the breakfast program accounts for:**

- Additional trash cans with lids, separate buckets for liquid waste, and trash bags.
- Cleaning supplies for classrooms, including wipes, paper towels, and hand brooms.
- Equipment to transport food and trash safely, e.g., rolling carts or coolers.
- Equipment to distribute food such as kiosks or tables.
- Equipment for the cafeteria, including extra coolers with adequate space to store additional food.
- Staff capacity, i.e., custodial staff and cafeteria staff to distribute breakfast.



- **Train staff and students** on the new breakfast procedures, including expectations around the appropriate disposal of waste.
- Ask your school nutrition director if breakfast samples can be served during lunch to **create excitement** for the school breakfast program.
- Ask your school food service director to **consider hosting promotions and contests** for students to boost participation in school breakfast.

- **Provide outreach materials** (included in this toolkit) to your school or district communication point of contact in order to market the program's launch—e.g., send a letter home to parents, post on the school website, issue a press release, schedule robocalls, and hang posters around the school.



- **Establish a clear feedback process** so stakeholders can raise any concerns or offer program recommendations.

# Overview of Sample Outreach Materials

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## Outreach Resources

Alongside your school nutrition director or manager, use the attached [PowerPoint](#) as a tool to facilitate discussion about the breakfast after the bell program at an all-staff meeting. The PowerPoint includes customizable slides that highlight the academic and health benefits of alternative breakfast service models and how the program would be a good fit for your school.

Share these customizable poster designs with your school nutrition director or manager for customization and posting around the school building:

- [Poster Template 1](#)
- [Poster Template 2](#)
- [Poster Template 3](#)

Provide the following materials to your school or district communications person for distribution:

- **Letter to parents**—announces the launch of the new breakfast program and how it works. This should be sent prior to the launch so that families are aware of and can participate in the program.
- **Automated phone message script**—serves as another way to notify parents of the new program and explain how their children can participate.

- **Memo to staff**—announces the launch of the program and encourages staff to provide program feedback. Attach the [“Breakfast for Learning”](#) brief that highlights research demonstrating the connection between academics and school breakfast.
- **Model press release**—can be used to notify the public of your new program and highlight your school’s commitment to meeting the needs of the whole child.
- **Sample school announcements**—can be used to promote the program in the school building.

## Stakeholders Surveys

Informally gather feedback after the program is implemented by requesting input about the program at an all-staff meeting. Be sure to invite your food service manager and custodial staff. Alternatively, you can formalize feedback collection by using this [collection of surveys](#) developed by Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom.



# Sample letter to parents

**Resource for:** principal/admin use  
**Target Audience:** parents/guardians

[Link to sample letter here](#)

[LEAVE ROOM FOR LETTERHEAD]

[Insert School Name]

[Insert Street Address 1]

[Insert Street Address 2]

[Insert Date]

Dear Parents and Guardians,

To ensure that all of our students are well prepared for academic success, [insert school name] is pleased to announce that we are launching a [insert breakfast model name]. Instead of offering breakfast in the cafeteria at [insert time], breakfast will now be served [insert location (e.g., in the classroom, from kiosks located in X and X hallways)] after the first bell [or insert time].

At [insert school name] the School Breakfast Program is FREE for all students every day. [Pull the previous sentence if breakfast will not be offered for free to all students.] We encourage every student to participate to ensure that they have the nutrition needed to succeed in the classroom. These meals meet federal nutrition standards and our staff is working to provide students with a variety of meal options.

For families that have early morning commitments or conflicting schedules, [insert breakfast model name] is a great solution to ensure your child starts the day off right—which is why we encourage participation in this program.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at [insert phone number] or [insert email address].

Sincerely,

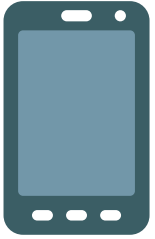
[insert principal's name], Principal

## Sample automated phone call script

**Resource for:** principal/admin use  
**Target Audience:** parents/guardians

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[Link to sample automated phone call script here](#)



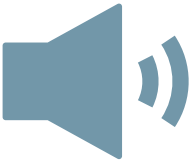
Good evening, parents and family members of [insert school/district]. To ensure that our students are well prepared for academic success, [insert school name] is pleased to announce the launch of our new [insert name of breakfast model]. Breakfast will now be moved out of the cafeteria and into [insert location] at [insert time]. Additionally, breakfast will now be offered FREE to all students every day. [Delete previous sentence if breakfast is not being offered for free.] We encourage you to participate in this program to ensure the overall health and academic success of your child.

## Sample school PA announcements

**Resource for:** principal/admin use  
**Target Audience:** students

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[Link to sample school PA announcement here](#)



Did you eat breakfast this morning? Eating breakfast provides you with important nutrients and energy to kick-start your day. We are now offering [insert name of breakfast program] every day at [insert time] in [insert location]. Don't forget to fuel up with breakfast tomorrow—and every—morning!

Are you feeling tired? Maybe that's because you aren't eating breakfast! Come to [insert location] every morning at [insert time] to get your breakfast and start your day off right!

Winter got you down? Warm up with breakfast in [insert location] at [insert time] every day and get rid of those morning chills!



## Sample staff memo

**Resource for:** principal/admin use  
**Target Audience:** school staff

[Link to sample staff memo here](#)

[LEAVE ROOM FOR LETTERHEAD]

**To:** All school staff

**From:** [Insert principal's name]

**Date:** [insert date]

**Subject:** School Breakfast Program

It is my pleasure to announce that [Insert school name] will now operate a [insert name of breakfast model] program beginning [insert date or school year]. Instead of requiring students to get to school early for breakfast, it will now be integrated into the school day to increase convenience and student access to this important meal. With this new model, we anticipate that participation in the program will increase significantly, and there will be an improvement in concentration, alertness, and overall well-being of our students.

Studies have shown that offering breakfast in the classroom not only increases participation in the breakfast program, but it also can reduce absenteeism and tardiness, as well as boost academic achievement. I have attached *[“Breakfast for Learning,”](#)* which provides additional information on the positive impact that school breakfast can have on our students. Currently, with breakfast offered in the cafeteria, only [insert percent] percent of our students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals eat school breakfast. We expect that this program will boost these numbers, making breakfast a key activity that allows our students to start the school day ready to learn.

Breakfast after the bell is a team effort involving everyone in our school community. In order for this to be an effective program, we have asked for input from teachers, school nutrition staff, custodians, and students. Your feedback has informed us of the necessary measures we need to take to successfully kick off our new breakfast program. I encourage you to support our new program as well as to communicate your needs and other input. We will periodically share updates about the program's progress at staff meetings.

Thank you for your continued work to ensure the success and well-being of our students. If you have any questions regarding [insert name of breakfast program], please feel free to contact me.

## Sample press release

**Resource for:** communications department  
**Target Audience:** community/local press

[Link to sample press release here](#)

[LEAVE ROOM FOR LETTERHEAD]

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Name]

[School]

[Phone]

[Email]

### **[Insert School] to offer [insert breakfast model] starting [insert date]**

[City, State] — [Insert school] is slated to offer [insert breakfast model] beginning [insert date]. In the past, students who wanted to eat breakfast had to arrive at school early and eat in the cafeteria. Many students are unable to get to school early due to hectic morning schedules. With the new breakfast model, nutritious meals will be offered to all students [at kiosks in the school/in the classroom] at the start of every school day.

According to the Food Research & Action Center’s *“Breakfast for Learning,”* a growing body of research shows that students who experience hunger have poorer cognitive functioning and are less able to succeed academically. In addition, absenteeism, tardiness, and visits to the school nurse are more common among students with hunger. Offering school breakfast not only improves the health and well-being of students, but it also supports the school learning environment. With this alternative breakfast program, [insert school] will be better able to meet the needs of more students on a regular basis and improve its performance as a school.

[Insert school] wants to inform the community as the transition to [insert breakfast model] begins. Moving forward, [insert school] anticipates that participation in school breakfast will increase and the learning environment among the school community will improve.

# Event Planning Materials

**Resource for:** food service manager use  
**Target Audience:** students and parents/guardians

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Talk with your food service director about hosting one of the following promotional events at your school to pique interest in school breakfast:

- **A taste-test event**, which can be a great way to get students to provide feedback on the menu options for your breakfast after the bell program. Offer taste tests of different potential breakfast items and ask for input from students. The enclosed supporting materials will make planning for such an event easy for you and the school nutrition department.
  - **A school breakfast video contest**, which can serve as an incentive to get students involved in raising awareness about the new breakfast after the bell program. Choose a winner to receive a prize and the honor of having his or her video shown schoolwide or shared on the district's social media accounts. On page 12 is a [customizable poster template](#) for the contest.
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## Taste Testing Your New Breakfast Menu

Work with the food service director or manager to engage students in your school's new breakfast program by hosting a taste-test event. This event gives students the opportunity to sample the food that will potentially be on the breakfast menu and provide feedback. The following steps can support organizing a successful event and should be completed by the relevant staff.

### PLANNING THE EVENT

1. Let parents know that the school is making efforts to gather student recommendations. Remind students and teachers about the event during morning announcements.
2. Ensure that all onsite kitchen staff are aware of their responsibilities leading up to and on the day of the event.
3. Identify all potential allergens and relay this information to all onsite staff and volunteers.
4. Order food and supplies. Make sure that you order any necessary portion cups, plates, or sample boats with forks or spoons for serving.
5. Use tally sheets or ballot boxes so that students can vote for their favorite breakfast items.

### DURING THE EVENT

1. Prepare the samples prior to the tasting. If you have enough staff or volunteers, portion the samples as you go and keep the pan in a warmer to ensure fresh samples.
2. Welcome students as they enter, explaining the purpose of the event and how they can vote. Tell attendees when results will be tallied and shared. Also share when the new breakfast item(s) will be added to the menu.
3. Hand out samples to the students or make samples available via self-serve areas.
4. Collect all surveys/count stickers on each tally sheet. Review the comments and then share the results with administration, parents, and students.
5. Take photos! Make sure that you gain permission from parents or guardians of students as well as any adults featured in photos.

### AFTER THE EVENT

1. Announce which items were most popular. Share when the new item(s) will be added to the menu.
2. Send a follow-up email or letter to parents and school staff about the event. Include pictures and any quotes or comments from the day, as well as changes that will be implemented to the breakfast menu due to student feedback.

## Sample video contest poster

**Resource for:** principal/admin use  
**Target Audience:** students

[Link to sample video contest poster](#)

# Submit an Entry to the School Breakfast Video Contest

**Create a video that highlights the positives of our  
new school breakfast program!**

To enter, [\[upload/send\]](#) a video that is no more than two minutes long to  
[\[insert YouTube Channel name/email\]](#) by [\[insert date\]](#).

**The winner receives [\[insert prize\]](#)!**

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*The video must not contain brand names, trademarks, or inappropriate material that is hateful or promotes bigotry, hatred, or harm against any group or individual. The video must not promote discrimination based on age, disability, gender, nationality, race, religion, or sexual orientation. [\[Adjust previous language based on school rules or honor code.\]](#)*

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## Resources:

Downloadable School Breakfast Materials. (2016). Retrieved from <http://meals4kids.org/downloads/schoolbreakfast>

Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom. (2014). Retrieved from <http://breakfastintheclassroom.org/>

School Breakfast Program (SBP) Marketing Ideas. (2014, January). Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/marketing-ideas>

The Chef Ann Foundation: The Lunch Box. Lunchroom Education. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.thelunchbox.org/marketing/lunchroom-education/?tab=tastings>

Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis A. & Vakil E. (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on the Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 150, 1089-1092.

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Food Research & Action Center. (2014). Breakfast for Learning. Retrieved January 4, 2017, from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Food Research & Action Center. (2014). Breakfast for Learning. Retrieved January 4, 2017, from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforhealth-1.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Food Research & Action Center. (2017). School Breakfast Scorecard 2015–2016 School Year. Retrieved January 4, 2017, from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-breakfast-scorecard-sy-2015-2016.pdf>.