

Superintendent/Principal



Superintendents and principals have strong interests in the academic success of their students. For instance, some schools serve breakfast on test days because studies show an improvement in performance when students have eaten breakfast. However, breakfast is important every school day. Students must be alert and learn skills throughout the school year to do well on standardized tests.

Principals play an important role in deciding to implement or expand the School Breakfast Program. They also lead teachers in the goal of developing successful students. They are role models for students and the leaders in the educational community. Principals can influence the success of the School Breakfast Program as well as the success of their students.

This section will explain the importance of breakfast and provide actions you can take to influence students to eat breakfast. Cited studies will reinforce the impact of breakfast on academic performance. Program concerns including costs and low participation will also be addressed.

A Principal may be concerned about:

SCHEDULING

The School Breakfast Program has various methods of serving students, so times of service may vary from program to program. However, certain methods, like Breakfast in the Classroom, can take only 10 minutes. Other methods allow students to eat their breakfast during a scheduled break between classes or on the way to class. If students cannot make it in time for breakfast served at school, consider Breakfast on the Bus. If scheduling is an issue, there is almost always a method of service that can accommodate your school's needs. (See *"There's More Than One Way to Serve Breakfast"*.)

COSTS

Breakfast adds additional cost, but often the participation is high enough to support the program. Not only will there be revenue generated through participation, but Federal reimbursement for breakfast can cover the additional food and/or labor costs. It may even provide a small profit that could be used creatively to improve the food service operation, supplement meal program costs, or develop nutrition education.

RESOURCES

In most cases, State Agencies administer Federal programs. It may be the State Agencies such as the Office of Public Instruction or Department of Education who provide guidance and support for schools implementing Child Nutrition Programs. These departments are interested in the success of your students too. Support for food service staff when implementing the School Breakfast Program is available through various organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture – Special Nutrition Programs (USDA-SNP), American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) and National Dairy Council (NDC). Each of these organizations can assist a school in implementing the School Breakfast Program. Other school districts are also a resource. School food service staffs usually emulate their peers' experiences.

LOW PARTICIPATION

Surveying students to determine what foods preferences is the first step to ensuring adequate participation. The next step is to market the program so students, parents, teachers, administrators, coaches and other staff are supportive. Also, looking at costs to determine a break-even point can be helpful. By calculating a break-even point, you will know exactly how many meals must be served to ensure a successful program.

Studies show...

“Students who ate school breakfast often had math grades that averaged almost a letter grade higher than students who ate school breakfast rarely.”

-- *Pediatrics*, Vol. 101 No.1, January 1998

School breakfast resulted in significant:

- **Increases in math grades**
- **Decreases in student absences**
- **Decreases in student tardiness**
- **Decreases in ratings of psychosocial problems**

Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School

“The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning”

<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org> (search “past issues” for 1998 vol. 152 no. 9)

http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m2250/n2_v37/20576437/p1/article.jhtml?term=psychosocial+functioning

“Children in the School Breakfast Program were shown to have significantly higher standardized achievement test scores than eligible non-participants.”

-- Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy, 1998

School breakfast resulted in:

- **Increased math and reading scores**
- **Fewer nurse’s office visits**
- **Improved classroom behavior**
- **Improved attentiveness reported by teachers**
- **Improved performance reported by parents**

Minnesota Dept. of Children, Families and Learning & University of Minnesota

“School Breakfast Programs/Energizing the Classroom”

<http://cfl.state.mn.us/energize.pdf>

“Children who ate breakfast at school scored notably higher on most of the tests than children who ate breakfast at home and children who did not eat breakfast.”

-- Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, October, 1996

Students eating school breakfast resulted in:

- **Higher scores on assessment tests**
- **Findings that support previous research**
- **Positive effects from eating breakfast in the classroom vs. the cafeteria**

Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School

“Maryland Meals for Achievement”

www.msde.state.md.us/programs/foodandnutrition/mmfa.pdf

“The benefits [of the School Breakfast Program] include higher performance on standardized tests, better school attendance, lowered incidence of anemia, reduced need for costly special education.”

-- Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, 1994

School Breakfast Tips for Principals

When principals implement a School Breakfast Program, they are taking a vital first step toward making sure that all students get the most from their school day. Here is what you can do to support the School Breakfast Program:

□ **PLAY A DIRECT ROLE IN HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY**

Implement a schedule that ensures that students have ample time for breakfast.

Congratulate them for “starting smart” with a good breakfast when you join them for breakfast once or twice a week.

Share that research shows kids who eat School Breakfast earn higher test scores.

□ **SUPPORT TEACHERS**

School breakfast helps children behave better and be more attentive in class. It also reduces disruptive hunger-related visits to the school nurse.

Distribute information to teachers about the link between breakfast and academic success. Encourage them to reinforce this message.

Work with teachers to incorporate school breakfast into lesson plans and participate in school wide promotions.

□ **PROVIDE A KEY RESOURCE FOR PARENTS**

Parents can count on school breakfast when family schedules are rushed and children do not feel like eating.

Send a letter or flyer to parents at the start of the year to make sure they know about the School Breakfast Program. Send regular communication home.

□ **BE A LEADER IN THE COMMUNITY**

Every year, talk about school breakfast successes and ideas with other principals.

Ask school nurses to keep them informed of “hunger visits” and develop a plan to promote breakfast to students and parents.

Request that bus drivers, custodians and para-professionals encourage kids to eat breakfast. Invite these familiar faces to join students as special guests.

Team up with your food service director to explore creative breakfast scheduling, assess meal quality, and make adjustments if necessary.

Why are Free and Reduced Price Applications Important?

More completed Free and Reduced Price Applications can mean more reimbursement and more state or Federal money for schools. Help families complete their application at the beginning of the school year. Here are ways you can encourage more families to complete their applications.

- ❑ Send a letter or flyer to parents explaining why parents should complete the application.
- ❑ Make sure applications are available in all languages spoken in your community. (Free and Reduced Applications, instructions and letters in 19 languages are available by visiting the United States Department of Agriculture, Child Nutrition Program web site.)
- ❑ Send applications to families along with notification of prices for school meals
- ❑ Remind parents that students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch also qualify for free or reduced priced breakfast.
- ❑ Include an envelope marked “Confidential” for application return.
- ❑ Follow up on students who were free or reduced the prior year and have not submitted an application for the current year