

# What to Consider When Starting a School Breakfast Program

Students participate in the School Breakfast Program for many reasons. Some students may enjoy the convenience of the school breakfast. For others, the companionship of their friends at breakfast is important. Teachers certainly know the benefits of breakfast. Eating breakfast improves students' test scores, attendance and classroom behavior. But not all students eat breakfast at school. The following information may help you overcome four common barriers to starting a School Breakfast Program.

## **Barrier 1: The Perception that School Breakfast is Only for Free and Reduced Price Students**

- Distribute a promotional brochure or flyer during orientation that outlines the nutritional value of the school breakfast. Include a cost comparison of the school breakfast, breakfast at home, and breakfast at a fast food restaurant. Direct the brochure to both parents and students.
- Before the start of the school year, send news releases to local papers or community newsletters to notify parents that the School Breakfast Program is available to all students. Include information about convenience, cost and nutritional value. Be sure to include the recipe for a breakfast menu item that can be adapted to serve four.
- Promote school breakfast every day over the intercom. Remind students that eating school breakfast is convenient, helps them do better in school, gives them energy for their daily activities and is a great way to socialize with their friends. Invite students to join their friends for a Breakfast Club at their school.
- Include articles about the benefit of the School Breakfast Program on your school's website. Why reinvent the wheel when you can link to [articles on the Office of Child Nutrition Services \(CNS\) web site](#). Include breakfast menus and family-size recipes.

## **Barrier 2: Poor School Food Service Image**

- Train food service staff on friendly customer service. Have the food service staff dress in brightly colored aprons and serve students with a smile!
- Use the **Breakfast Preference Survey** to assess students' breakfast likes and dislikes. Let students know that you modified the menu according to their preferences.
- During school open houses or parent-teacher meetings, distribute the free Eat Smart. Play Hard™ brochure about school breakfast. Place the two breakfast posters from the **Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Kit** around the cafeteria Eat Smart. Play Hard. Campaign

- Select special dates and invite parents to eat school breakfast with their children. Offer parents a tour of the food service department and have recipes available to take home. Include a nutrient analysis to demonstrate the nutritious quality of the school breakfast.
- Serve all the school staff a free breakfast on the first day of school.
- Entice students to eat the school breakfast by handing out free breakfast samples during lunch or student break periods.
- Invite teachers, school nurses, food service staff, physical education teachers, school nurses and the principal to act as positive role models and eat breakfast with their students. Have your food service staff take the checklist **Are You a Fit Kid Role Model?** and determine if they are good role models for their students.
- Distribute menus to teachers so they can discuss the foods served in school. For fun activities that the food service staff and teachers can use with their students, refer to the **Fun In the Classroom** lessons.

### **Barrier 3: Poor Accessibility**

- Try a different form of service. Use hallway vendor carts or other mobile carts to offer a quick stop for students. Place the carts near the building's main entrance, student common areas or other gathering areas in the building. Carts can offer a full reimbursable breakfast and a la carte items.
- Allow students to eat breakfast in the classroom while they listen to announcements or discuss current events. Students can pick up a Grab 'n' Go breakfast from the cafeteria and take it to their classroom to eat with their friends. Allow students to visit other classrooms so they can eat with their siblings or friends. Set trash cans outside of the classrooms for trash pick up.
- Run two serving lines instead of one or implement a self-service station. Schools that offer a self-service station report that participation in breakfast increases and students take reasonably sized portions.

### **Barrier 4: Lack of Time**

- Offer breakfast later in the morning, between first and second class periods, rather than first thing in the morning. Add extra cashiers so students can grab their breakfast in the time allowed. Refer to **Breakfast After 1<sup>st</sup> Period.**
- The majority of schools have found they only need 10-15 minutes to serve breakfast. Some schools have found it helpful to move bus schedules back as little as 5 or 10 minutes and offer bus drivers a complimentary breakfast.
- Pre-portion foods as much as possible.

This information is from the **School Breakfast for First Class Learning** developed by the Midwest 5-Star Child Nutrition Task Force.