



STUDENTS CAN HAVE THEIR BREAKFAST AND EAT IT TOO:

A Guide to Expanding School Breakfast in Maryland

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Ending hunger and promoting well-being



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. During the 2007-2008 school year, however, only 44.2 eligible low-income children across the state participated in school breakfast for every 100 who participated in school lunch. Barriers to participating in the School Breakfast Program exist and must be addressed to ensure students can reap the academic and nutritional benefits of the meal. Some factors that prevent students from eating school breakfast include:

- Tight morning schedules, particularly students who take public transportation to arrive at school;
- Not being hungry right when they wake up;
- Preference/peer pressure to play outside instead of coming in to the cafeteria; and
- Stigmatization of obtaining school meals.

Taking these factors into consideration, schools must develop a plan for reaching students with a more innovative delivery model. Some schools in Maryland have taken creative steps to increase breakfast participation by structuring breakfast as a part of the school day. They know that incorporating breakfast formally into the school day dramatically increases participation by making it convenient and accessible to all. Some models schools have used include:

Breakfast in the Classroom

Providing breakfast in the classroom is an effective way to boost breakfast participation. Students eat breakfast in their classroom either at the beginning of the school day or early during the day. Often breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria by students or served from carts in the hallways by food service staff. While teachers are initially concerned that classroom breakfast might cut down on class time, they find that students settle down faster when breakfast is served in the classroom. While the students eat breakfast during the first ten minutes of class, teachers use the time to take attendance, do usual administrative tasks, or read with their students. Teachers see the difference that classroom breakfast makes – students pay more attention and are more focused on their work. Once they start serving breakfast in the classroom, teachers don't want to stop.

- If the cafeteria staff need additional assistance:
 - Use student volunteers and offer service hours.
 - Recruit parent volunteers.
- Ensure all school staff members are supportive of this service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff in order to get all hands on deck.
- Have all components of the breakfast and accountability sheets well labeled for maximum organization.
- Encourage food service to prepare/package cold breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Allow teachers to eat breakfast with their students to model good breakfast eating habits. This also provides buy-in to the teacher to allow breakfast in the classroom.

Grab and Go Breakfast

All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can grab a bag quickly, either from the cafeteria line or from carts on school grounds. Students can eat in the cafeteria, the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds. Grab and go breakfast bags are especially convenient for middle and high schools with large numbers of students on the move. Some schools worried about the additional waste that might be produced by grab and go bags or classroom breakfast. Custodial staff at the schools, however, find that this is not the case. Special containers are available for students to throw out their trash.

- If the cafeteria staff need additional assistance:
 - Use student volunteers and offer service hours.
 - Recruit parent volunteers.
- Ensure all school staff members are supportive of this service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff in order to get all hands on deck.
- Encourage food service to prepare/pre-package breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Place breakfast carts/tables in high-traffic areas, particularly near school entrances.
- Run multiple points of service and only offer breakfasts in an easy to grab format.

Breakfast After 1st Period

Because a lot of children – especially teens – do not like to eat breakfast early in the morning, schools offer a “second chance breakfast.” Breakfasts are available in the cafeteria, from “grab and go” carts in the hallway, other high traffic areas, or in the classroom. Having a second chance breakfast means that students get a healthy meal – and the energy they need to power through the rest of the morning.

While efforts such as convenient breakfast packaging and stronger marketing yield positive results, schools with the greatest successes in increasing breakfast participation are the schools that have structurally changed how breakfast is delivered to their students. Emphasis should be placed on access to breakfast through its delivery model. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom or the hallways, the flexibility to eat during the morning in school is essential to ensure optimum participation.



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INTRODUCTION

THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The School Breakfast Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in schools and institutions, serving breakfast to 101,000 students in 1,475 Maryland schools. Many different types of schools serve breakfast, elementary through high school, rural and urban. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors.

The School Breakfast Program operates very similarly to the School Lunch Program. Both programs allow children to qualify for free or reduced-priced meals, based on their family's income.

BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY BREAKFAST

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day – educationally and nutritionally. A key piece of boosting children's well-being and improving schools is to ensure that each child can start the day right with a healthy breakfast at school.

- **Breakfast helps children learn.** Numerous studies show that breakfast improves learning and attendance, and reduces behavior problems and tardiness. Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.

- **Breakfast promotes good health.**

Eating breakfast at school results in fewer visits to the school nurse, improves children's diets, reduces absenteeism, and helps build healthy eating habits. Additionally, children who start the day with a good breakfast are less likely to be obese.

The benefits of breakfast are substantial, but too many children in Maryland miss out on a healthy start to their day. During the 2007-2008 school year, only 44.2 eligible low-income children across the state participated in school breakfast for every 100 who participated in school lunch *School Breakfast Report Card*, Food Research and Action Center). Because eating breakfast is essential to children's ability to learn, stay healthy, and behave in school, it is vital to monitor how well schools, school districts, counties, and the state as a whole are doing in reaching students with school breakfast.

With less than half of eligible children participating in the breakfast program and more children becoming eligible as families are harshly affected during this economic recession, it is imperative to reduce barriers to participation and prioritize the expansion of breakfast participation in our schools.



THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed for stakeholders who desire their students start the day with a healthy breakfast by implementing flexible serving models to maximize participation.

It will help determine the type of delivery service most suited for your school and demonstrate how the delivery service can be implemented. This toolkit also showcases innovative breakfast delivery models from around Baltimore as well as Maryland. It profiles various programs' operations and accomplishments as well as the barriers that have been faced and the tactics used to overcome these challenges.

GETTING STARTED

Whether you are a school principal or a food service director, there is something in this toolkit to help you enlist support from key decision makers and begin planning your improved breakfast program.

Included are the following tools:

- Descriptions, ideas, and examples of various delivery service options
- Information and problem solving ideas for stakeholders at every level
- Resources and tools to communicate breakfast to various stakeholders

What we find particularly exciting is that this [school breakfast] is a relatively simple intervention that can significantly improve children's academic performance and psychological well-being.

J. Michael Murphy, EdD, School Breakfast
Program researcher, Massachusetts General
Hospital and Harvard Medical School

SCHOOL BREAKFAST BASICS

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally-assisted meal program that operates in public and private nonprofit schools and residential child care institutions. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals.



NEED

- There is a significant disparity in participation rates at breakfast compared to participation rates at lunch, especially for low-income students.
- Not all students eat breakfast at home.
 - Students may not be hungry first thing in the morning.
 - Students and families may lack of time to eat in the morning.
- Middle school and high school students are less likely to eat breakfast than elementary school students.
- Only 35 percent of parents of children ages 6 to 11 report eating breakfast each day with their children (U.S. Census Bureau).
- Only 22 percent of parents of middle- and high- school- aged students report eating breakfast daily with their children (U.S. Census Bureau).
 - More than twice as many parents report eating dinner with their children each day

BENEFITS

- Enhances academic performance
 - Children score higher on certain tests including memory recall, reading and math
- Improves student behavior
 - Children aren't as restless
 - Fewer discipline problems
- Improves the learning environment
 - Children are absent less frequently
 - Children are not tardy as frequently
- Improves the quality of children's diets
 - Increased consumption of fruit and milk
 - Increased intake of vitamin C, vitamin A and calcium
 - Increased variety of foods eaten

PARTICIPATION

- In Maryland, only 44.2% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in the 2007-2008 year.
 - This figure varies widely by county.
- Nationally, only 45.9% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in the 2007-2008 year.

ELIGIBILITY

- All children at participating schools are able to purchase a meal as part of the School Breakfast Program.
- A child whose household income is less than 130% of the poverty level is eligible for free breakfasts (<\$28,665 for a family of 4).
- A child whose household income is between 130% and 185% of the poverty level is eligible for reduced-price breakfasts (<\$39,690 for a family of 4).

NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Breakfasts offered as part of the School Breakfast Program must meet current dietary guidelines.
- Breakfasts must contain $\frac{1}{4}$ of a child's daily requirement for calories, protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C.
- No more than 30% of calories can come from fat, with no more than 10% of calories as saturated fat.
- Generally, breakfasts contain a serving of milk, fruit or fruit juice, and 2 servings from the grains or meat/meat alternate group (or 1 serving from each).

REIMBURSEMENT AND FUNDING

- The Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture funds the program nationally.
- In Maryland, the School Breakfast Program is administered through the State Department of Education.
- For the 2007-2008 school year, each meal served as part of the School Breakfast Program was reimbursed as follows:

Reimburse Rate for the School Breakfast Program (2007-2008)

	Non-Severe Need School	Severe Need School	Price of Meals to Children
Free	\$1.35	\$1.61	\$0
Reduced price	\$1.05	\$1.31	\$0.30 (Maximum)
Paid	\$0.24	\$0.24	varies

- Schools with greater than 40% of their students purchasing free or reduced price lunches qualify as severe need. An additional \$0.26 for each free and reduced price breakfast is reimbursed.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST EXPANSION

- Alternative service methods to traditional breakfast consumed in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day:
 - **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Breakfast delivered to the classroom and consumed in the classroom setting before school starts.
 - **Grab and Go Breakfast:** Breakfasts packaged in bags with all components of the meal available at sites throughout school for pick up on the go, before school or during 1st period.
 - **Breakfast After 1st Period:** Breakfast served/consumed after the 1st period between classes (and finished during 2nd period) or during their break.
- Other options:
 - Aggressive outreach and extended meal times
 - Eliminate the reduced-price meal category
 - Offer universal breakfast to all students

The districts that make breakfast a part of the school day (such as serving breakfast in the classroom) have the highest participation rates. The two top performing districts in the country, each serving more than 90 low-income students breakfast for every 100 that receive lunch, feature programs in which students receive breakfast at no charge and alternative service methods that make breakfast an essential part of the school day.



ASSESSING THE NEED IN YOUR SCHOOL

Prior to expanding the breakfast program, it is important to assess the demographics, need, and interest of your school. Some questions to ask about your school:

DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?

If you do not currently have the program and are interested in finding out more information about reimbursements, program regulations, and more, please go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov> for more details.

DOES YOUR SCHOOL QUALIFY FOR MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT?

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) is a state-funded breakfast program administered through the State Department of Education. First started in 1998 in several Maryland elementary schools, MMFA allows schools to offer breakfast for free to all students in the classroom regardless of their family income. MMFA in-classroom breakfast increases breakfast participation.

Schools with more than 40 percent free and reduced-price meal enrollment can apply for the limited state MMFA funding. The state seeks applications from all schools that are eligible. Factors taken into consideration include geographic diversity and varying rates of free and reduced price school enrollment. The state provides funding to the schools for the meal costs or proportion of meal costs that are not reimbursed by the federal government. For the 2007-2008 school year, 196 schools across Maryland were funded to participate in the MMFA program. Across the state, more than 630 schools were eligible for MMFA in theory for the 2007-2008 school year, but the state funding level did not cover all of these schools. For the 2008-2009 school year, the program was funded at \$3.1 million dollars – enough funding to cover just one-third of eligible schools.

Maryland Meals for Achievement was legislated after private foundations studied the impact of serving universal breakfast in the classroom at the beginning of the school day. Participation jumped dramatically from about 18 percent before the pilot began to 85 percent within two months of serving breakfast in the classroom. The initiative sought to reduce the stigma children may feel about participating in a program that's seen as only "for poor kids" by serving breakfast to all students, and it sought to make it easier to serve breakfast to students who may have been unable to participate in the cafeteria before the school day began by serving breakfast in the classroom. An evaluation by researchers from Harvard University found that MMFA schools reported a decrease in tardiness and suspensions and an increase in Maryland School Performance Program (MSPAP) scores and grades.

If you do not currently have the program and are interested in finding out more information about reimbursements, program regulations, and more, please go to http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/meals_achieve.htm for more details.

WHO ARE YOUR STUDENTS?

Who composes the population you are serving? Are there specific populations that are underserved? Does your school include grades K-6 or K-8 or K-12? Middle school and high school students are less likely to eat breakfast at school. The *Going Further* section of this toolkit includes some ideas to strategically target your outreach to older students.

WHAT IS CURRENT PARTICIPATION?

Compare your participation rates for breakfast and lunch with total enrollment for each school.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?

Determine what barriers might exist that keep students from participating in the breakfast program. What are some of the reasons breakfast participation does not reach its potential?

WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM WORK WELL?

What strengths does your school or district have that your school can utilize?

WHO NEEDS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHY BREAKFAST IS IMPORTANT?

Breakfast is beneficial for students, but do all of your stakeholders know? By eating a healthy meal before school, students are better prepared for learning. Parents are assured knowing they have another option for providing a nutritious breakfast for their children. Principals and teachers see improved attendance and tardiness, as well as improved academic performance, in students. Students who have eaten a school breakfast have higher assessment scores. Determine who needs more information and provide studies to educate them on why expanding breakfast is imperative. The *Stakeholders* section of this toolkit outlines those who would be instrumental in assisting with school breakfast expansion and their potential concerns.

ASSESSING YOUR SCHOOL

USDA has several great resources on expanding breakfast including goal sheets and cost calculation sheets to evaluate breakfast your school.

Please go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/CND/Breakfast/expansion/assessingpotential.htm> for more information.

BREAKFAST SERVING MODELS

There are alternative breakfast service methods in addition to traditional breakfast.

The breakfast serving methods are:

TRADITIONAL BREAKFAST

Breakfast consumed in the cafeteria at the same time for all students or in shifts.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

Breakfast delivered to the classroom and consumed in the classroom setting before school starts.

GRAB AND GO BREAKFAST

Breakfasts packaged in bags with all components of the meal available at sites throughout school for pick up on the go, before school or during 1st period.

BREAKFAST AFTER 1ST PERIOD

Breakfast served/consumed after the 1st period between classes (and finished during 2nd period) or during their break.

In selecting the best meal service method(s) for your school, talk to other schools that have already been through the process and have selected a service method you may be considering. Talk to them, find out what works, what does not work, what resources they needed to get started and what obstacles they needed to overcome.

Evaluate your own school for these opportunities to begin a program or increase participation. Structuring breakfast a part of the school day, however, is the most effective way to increase participation. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom or the hallways, the flexibility to eat during the morning in school ensures optimal participation.



Traditional Breakfast

- Cafeteria is already set up for large flow of students in one location.
- It requires no special transportation or packaging of foods; conducive to serving hot food options.

Will traditional breakfast work for my school? Check YES or NO after each of the following statements.

1. School busses arrive early enough to allow students sufficient time in the cafeteria. ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Non-bussed students can arrive at school in time to participate in a cafeteria meal. ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. The cafeteria can easily serve as a central meeting place for students in the morning. ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Staff is available and willing for morning service. ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. Cafeteria is available for use/not in use for other purposes before school. ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Cafeteria is centrally located for ease of service. ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Teachers are likely to eat breakfast with students. ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. Cafeteria is large enough to serve potential participants. ☐ YES ☐ NO

SUCCESS STORY

School: **General Wolfe Street Academy (School #23)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **Pre-K – 5th**

Enrollment: **161**

Free and Reduced Meal Enrollment: **93%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): **136/day**



Each morning, doors to General Wolfe Street Academy open at 7:20AM to welcome its students and families in the morning. School breakfast ends at 8:00AM when classes begin, however, the serving line closes around 7:50AM. Families are encouraged to bring their children early to school to participate in breakfast and also to attend the school's community meeting conducted by the principal. Community announcements are made and teachers report on general classroom progress. The cafeteria staff serve the breakfasts, parents help feed their younger children who need assistance with breakfasts, and custodial staff clean-up when students are dismissed to class with their teachers. The school offers a quick breakfast to late students until 9:00AM. They either eat quickly in the cafeteria or take milk and graham crackers to their classroom. General Wolfe Street Academy has been able to achieve such high participation in the morning because they make the cafeteria a central gathering place for students and encourage families to get involved in the morning.

SUCCESS STORY

School: **Bentalou Elementary School (School #150)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **Pre-K – 5th**

Enrollment: **413**

Free/Reduced: **93%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): **290/day**



Breakfast at Bentalou Elementary School runs for an extended period: it starts at 7:30AM and ends at 8:15 AM. Younger students generally arrive first to the cafeteria to be served in the cafeteria serving line. Older students meet in their classrooms and arrive to the cafeteria with their teachers. The principal at Bentalou Elementary heavily promotes breakfast in the school community by sending fliers sent home and personal communication with individual families. Teachers assist with breakfast delivery, clean up, and maintenance in the cafeteria along with the cafeteria and custodial staff. The staff at the school has seen improvements in tardiness because breakfast at Bentalou is offered consistently to its students. Bentalou has been successful with traditional breakfast because of a strong commitment from the principal to outreach to families and school staff to assist with the maintenance of the program.

Take-home lessons for traditional breakfast:

- Offer breakfast for an extended period in the morning to maximize students' ability to get to the cafeteria.
- Require all students to enter the building through the door closest to the cafeteria or make the cafeteria the mandatory morning gathering place for students.
- Encourage teachers and administrators to assist with the program.
- Ensure that parents know about breakfast and invite them to come in the school in the morning.
- Run two serving lines, create a self-service breakfast bar, and offer foods that are easy to grab to serve breakfast quicker.

Breakfast in the Classroom

- Breakfast in the classroom is the best way to bring the benefits of school breakfast to all the students. Once you bring the food to the kids, just about every child eats.
- Breakfast in the classroom provides nutritious meals to students who do not have time to eat breakfast before school.
- Children can look forward to a good breakfast in the comfort of the familiar surroundings of their classroom.
- If the cafeteria is too small, crowded or in use, more students can eat a good breakfast when served in the classroom.
- Students can stop by the cafeteria and pick up their breakfast, along with milk and juice, and then go to class.

How does breakfast in the classroom work?

Students eat breakfast in the classroom at the beginning of the school day or during morning break time. Breakfasts can be individually packaged in easy to grab bags. Breakfasts can be either hot or cold, depending on a school's facilities. Either food service staff can deliver breakfast to each floor or classroom before class begins or student representatives from each class can pick up pre-packed meals from the cafeteria and deliver them to the classroom. Carts, crates, and/or coolers can be used to transport the breakfast items. Following breakfast, students or staff can return the coolers and any remaining food to the cafeteria.

Concern about losing valuable instructional time is valid, however, little teaching time is lost, as breakfast in the classroom only takes 10 to 15 minutes for the students to receive and eat. Many teachers use that time to take attendance, collect homework, deliver announcements, read to the class, or share current events. Alternatively, students are free to complete their homework or work on exercises or chat with each other. Everyone helps with a quick clean up, the trash goes outside the classroom door for custodial staff to collect, and the untouched food and food service equipment is returned to the cafeteria. After a few weeks, students develop routines and classroom eating manners, leaving no garbage or stains. And, each morning, within 10 to 15 minutes, all the students are fed a healthy breakfast, and the class is really ready to learn.

Many teachers feel this is a valuable use of time and that their classes are more productive when students start their day with a healthy breakfast. Many teachers state that breakfast in the classroom does not interfere with their ability to teach and that the time spent in breakfast in the classroom is more than made up in the quality of the instruction throughout the day.

Why serve breakfast in the classroom?

Breakfast in the classroom yields the highest participation rates and ensures that students who want to eat can eat. It is a great model that reaches students who do not have time to eat before school, or who are not able to get to school early enough for breakfast served before the start of

classes. Breakfast in the classroom also alleviates the space crunch some schools feel because they do not have enough cafeteria space to serve all of their students breakfast in the cafeteria. Classrooms provide a familiar and comfortable environment to students eat, learn, and socialize. Breakfast in the classroom is convenient and can be prepared quickly, with little extra cost on labor or equipment

When does breakfast in the classroom work best?

Breakfast in the classroom can work in a variety of schools, but it works particularly well in elementary schools where the students stay in their homeroom. Breakfast in the classroom also works best in schools with the following characteristics:

- Busses and students arrive just before the start of classes.
- Students are in the same room at the start of each school day.
- Teachers would be supportive of the change in location from the cafeteria to the classroom.
- There is limited space to serve breakfast in the cafeteria.
- The cafeteria is centrally located to facilitate delivering the breakfast to individual classrooms.

Will breakfast in the classroom work for my school? Check YES or NO after each of the following statements.

1. Participation in the breakfast program is significantly lower than lunch. ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. School buses arrive right before school begins. ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Non-bussed students arrive right before school begins. ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Classroom schedules are flexible enough to incorporate breakfast into the day. ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. The principal is open to the change. ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Teachers are open to the new breakfast model. ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Food service staff and custodial staff are willing to help with new breakfast option. ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. The cafeteria is small and crowded. ☐ YES ☐ NO
9. The cafeteria is centrally located for ease of service. ☐ YES ☐ NO
10. Classrooms and the kitchen are on the same floor or have accessibility ramps. ☐ YES ☐ NO

SUCCESS STORY

School: Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary School (School #34)

School System: Baltimore City Public Schools

Grades Served: Pre-K – 5th

Enrollment: 289

Free/Reduced: 94%

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): 254/day



Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary first implemented breakfast in the classroom as a pilot program in 2000. The school staff were floored by the results and have maintained the program since then.

"Since we've had breakfast... more kids come to school. Attendance has gone up. I notice a difference in concentration...And they're not coming in with 3 bags of onion chips from the cornerstore...It's healthier, and we don't have colds and flus like we used to." –Administrator

The school designates in classroom breakfast to start and end at 7:45AM to 8:10AM. Because the cafeteria staff realized that personnel and time limited them, the school sought out parent volunteers who help pack the food the day before. In the morning, the cafeteria staff and older student helpers distribute the meals to the classrooms. During breakfast time, teachers are encouraged to eat breakfast with their students. Some teachers use that time to do character building focusing on their school themes of respect, and honesty to set the tone for the day. Other teachers use the time simply to interact with their students and model good social skills. To clean up the breakfast, Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary utilizes large, plastic trashcans for kids to drop their waste because it is cleaner than leaving a garbage bag on the floor. Each class also designates a student helper to assist the teacher with spills and clean up.

To facilitate breakfast in the classroom, Charles Carroll Barrister holds an orientation for students to show them how to receive their breakfast, which meal components they need, and how to properly dispose of their trash. The school also provides training on breakfast in the classroom at an all-staff meeting so teachers understand what meal components students are supposed to take and how to properly fill out accountability sheets to track students who take breakfast in the morning.

To ensure parents know about the program, the Charles Carroll Barrister places a banner outside of the school and consistently sends information about breakfast in their parent newsletter. The school also sends letters home to homes where children are chronically tardy to remind them that breakfast is only offered in the classroom until 8:10AM.

As a result of structuring breakfast in the school day through in-classroom breakfast, Charles Carroll Barrister has seen tremendous response through increased participation in students eating breakfast and also improvements in student punctuality and attendance.

SUCCESS STORY

School: **Sarah Roach Elementary School (School #73)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **Pre-K – 5th**

Enrollment: **285**

Free/Reduced: **95%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): **239/day**



Sarah M. Roach Elementary has instituted breakfast in the classroom for several years and has had consistently great participation. School starts at 7:45AM, but students are allowed into the school building at 7:30AM. The school makes the cafeteria the central gathering place for students. Teachers then line their students up and walk them to their respective classrooms. While students report to the cafeteria in the morning, they receive breakfast in the classroom. Breakfast is designated from 7:45AM to 8:05AM, however, the custodial staff does not pick up the crates until closer to 9:00AM, thus children who are late are encouraged to still eat breakfast. Students who are very late are sometimes sent to the cafeteria to eat there.

The cafeteria staff prepares the breakfasts for each classroom the afternoon before service. Before the school day begins, breakfasts are delivered in crates that are wheeled to the classrooms. Each cart contains the requisite number of components based on class enrollment, a Provision 2 accountability sheet, and a description of what is included that morning encased in a sheet protector. Some teachers for younger students distribute breakfast to each desk prior to students entering the classroom. Teachers of older students have students grab the components on their own. Teachers have their students dispose of their breakfast in trash cans set in the hallways of the classroom, rather than dispose breakfasts in the classroom. Teachers place the crates outside of the classroom for pick-up. The custodial staff go through the hallways to pick-up the crates and handle the trash around 9:00AM.

Because breakfast has been served in the classroom for so long at Sarah Roach Elementary, it is very ingrained in the school's culture. All staff, particularly custodial staff, are on board with breakfast in the classroom. To implement in-classroom breakfast, the school used at least one milk crate for every classroom, and required four carts to deliver the food. Two carts (one for food and one for drink) for the first floor and two carts (one for food and one for drink) for the second floor. Requiring few outside resources and enthusiasm from the school's staff, Sarah Roach Elementary School serves over 80% of their student population breakfast in the classroom.

SUCCESS STORY

School: **Calverton Elementary/Middle School (School #75)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **Pre-K – 8th**

Enrollment: **685**

Free and Reduced Meal Enrollment: **88%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (December 2008): **568/day**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (December 2007): **199 /day**



Prior to October of 2008, Calverton served breakfast in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day in the cafeteria from 8:30AM to 8:50AM. Students who were late were not able to eat breakfast. Food service at Calverton Elementary/Middle School recognized that barrier of time. Twenty minutes is too short of time period for students to eat breakfast, especially for kids who arrive to school by bus. Because there are numerous entry points into the building and not enough staff capacity for grab and go carts at each entryway, Calverton decided that the in-classroom breakfast model would suit them best.

Prior to the serving morning, food service staff organize shelf-stable boxed breakfasts along with an attendance sheet and an accountability sheet. In the morning, student volunteers help administrators and food service deliver the breakfasts to each classroom. These student volunteers receive service hours, which are required for 8th grade students at the school. Kicked around about using service hours for the eight-graders to help with the delivery.

During the first twenty minutes of the day (8:50AM-9:10AM), students eat breakfast in the classroom with their teachers. Many teachers opt to let students socialize and do schoolwork, while others use the time to read with their students. Custodial and food service staff pick up trash and breakfast leftovers after breakfast is over.

In such a short amount of time, Calverton Elementary/Middle School has gone from serving a little over a quarter of its students breakfast to over four-fifths of their students. It took the leadership and commitment of its school staff to commit to a new model and get everyone on board. They have noticed great improvements in students' demeanor and health since the implementation.

Take-home lessons for breakfast in the classroom:

- If the cafeteria staff need additional assistance:
 - Use student volunteers and offer service hours.
 - Recruit parent volunteers.
- Ensure all school staff members are on board with the service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff.
- Have all components of the breakfast and accountability sheets well labeled for maximum organization.
- Encourage food service to prepare/package cold breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Allow teachers to eat breakfast with their students to model good breakfast eating habits. This also provides buy-in to the teacher to allow breakfast in the classroom.

Grab and Go Breakfast

- Grab and go breakfasts are convenient. They take less time to prepare than most traditional breakfast meals and decrease long lines.
- A bagged breakfast can be enjoyed on the go, before school or during break.
- Secondary students like grab and go breakfast for opportunities to eat at different locations and times.

How does a grab and go breakfast work?

Grab and go breakfasts are packaged in paper or plastic bags, boxes or trays. Students pick up their breakfast before school and are able to eat it when and where they want, within school guidelines. Food service staff pack reimbursable breakfasts into individual bags, generally the day before but can also do so in the morning. Alternatively, food service can purchase prepackaged reimbursable breakfasts in boxes (more information on these breakfasts can be found later in this section). The breakfasts are served with milk the next morning. Breakfasts are usually cold; however, with a little bit of preparation in the morning, they can include hot items as well.

Grab and go breakfasts can be served first thing in the morning, between classes, or at a mid-morning break. Bags can be served from carts located in the hallway, school entrance, cafeteria, or other high traffic areas at the school. Students can take the breakfast and eat it outside, in the hall, in class, or in the cafeteria, depending on what the school decides is appropriate. There is a lot of flexibility with this method of serving breakfast, depending on the school's needs. The students are responsible for following the school's policies as to where and when they can eat and where and how to throw away their trash.

How do breakfast carts with grab and go breakfast work?

Breakfast carts act as mobile serving areas for breakfast. Instead of having the students come to the cafeteria for breakfast, breakfast is brought to them. Reimbursable grab and go breakfasts work best with a breakfast cart. Breakfasts can be prepackaged; however, some schools offer choices from their breakfast cart. The general rule is the food has to be portable.

Schools typically put their breakfast carts in high traffic areas such as the main entrance, hallway, outside the front door, or near the gymnasium. Wherever the students congregate is where the cart is located. Carts usually have a computer with software to facilitate the process of counting the number of breakfasts served. Carts are filled with breakfast items, including milk from the cafeteria and then taken to the location outside the cafeteria. A food service staff operates the cart before school, during morning break, or between classes, depending on the school.

There is almost no other added cost or time for the food service staff to assemble and serve breakfast. Students are responsible for their trash and following school rules as to where and when they can eat their breakfast.

Why serve a grab and go breakfast?

More students eat breakfast when served in as a grab and go model. Grab and go breakfasts make breakfasts easier for the students, making it more convenient for them to choose to eat breakfast. Some students are not hungry first thing in the morning or rather hang out with friends. Grab and go breakfasts give students the flexibility to eat breakfast where and when they want. Grab and go breakfasts are convenient for food service staff and can take less time to prepare than traditional breakfasts. Due to the ease and efficiency of grabbing breakfasts in this model, schools are able to serve breakfast more effectively by reaching more students in a quicker manner.

When does a grab and go breakfast work best?

Grab and go breakfasts seem to work particularly well in middle and high schools because older students enjoy the flexibility of this model. Grab and go also works best in schools with the following characteristics:

- Busses and students arrive just before the start of classes.
- The cafeteria or gym is crowded or not available for breakfast.
- Students rely on vending and convenience foods from outside the school for breakfast.
- The cafeteria is not located where students enter the building or hang out.
- The cafeteria tends to be congested or is too small to serve breakfast.

Will grab and go breakfast work for my school? Check YES or NO after each of the following statements.

1. Participation in the breakfast program is significantly lower than lunch. ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. School buses arrive right before school begins. ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Non-bussed students arrive right before school begins. ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Food carts are available or space exists for placement of tables in entrances for “curbside” services. ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. The principal is open to the change. ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Food service staff and custodial staff are willing to help with new breakfast option. ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Breakfast needs to be served faster and serving areas need to be more accessible. ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. Students grab soft drinks and snacks from vending machines as they rush to class. ☐ YES ☐ NO
9. Meal payment system does not require cash at point of service. ☐ YES ☐ NO
10. The cafeteria is small and crowded. ☐ YES ☐ NO
11. Congestion in cafeteria dining room needs to be reduced. ☐ YES ☐ NO

SUCCESS STORY

School: **Rippling Woods Elementary School**

School System: **Anne Arundel County Public Schools**

Grades Served: **Pre-K – 5th**

Enrollment: **680**

Free/Reduced: **36%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (March 2008): **175/day**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (March 2005): **41/day**



Anne Arundel County has instituted “breakfast with class” for some of their schools that are not eligible for Maryland Meals for Achievement. “breakfast with class” is an innovative breakfast delivery program that allows students to receive breakfast through the cafeteria but eat breakfast in the classroom. During the allotted time set for school breakfast, students stream through the cafeteria serving line with personal bags to place their breakfast items. Students still fall under the three categories for meals and pay according to eligibility. They then bring their bags to their respective classrooms and eat breakfast in the classroom. Teachers are also offered breakfast and are encouraged to join in with their students. Anne Arundel has seen higher breakfast participation rates for the eight schools that have “breakfast with class” than schools that do not.

At Rippling Woods Elementary School, the cafeteria serves breakfast at 7:50 AM and stops at 8:15PM. School officially starts at 8:20AM. There are two serving lines that students are able to go through to pick up their bag with the breakfast components plus milk and juice and pay if necessary. Students take breakfasts to their classrooms and enjoy with their classmates and teacher. Cafeteria staff pre-package breakfasts the afternoon before the serving and store it in the storeroom overnight. They rotate through a variety of cold breakfasts, including banana loafs, muffins, and bagels. Teachers often use the time students use to eat to make classroom announcements. Clean up is incredibly simple: students place their trash in the bags the breakfast came in and place it in the classroom’s trashcan. Custodial staff pick up the trash bags at the end of the day and love that they do not have to clean the cafeteria in the morning. The principal and teaching staff are incredibly supportive of “breakfast with class” and regularly send out newsletters reminding parents and families of the program.

As a result of this innovative method, breakfast participation has increased substantially over the past few years at Rippling Woods Elementary. In March of 2005, breakfast participation was an average of 41 students per day. The March 2008 average was 175.

SUCCESS STORY

School: **National Academy Foundation High (School #421)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **9th – 12th**

Enrollment: **319**

Free/Reduced: **58%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): **85/day**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2007): **15/day**



National Academy Foundation High School is in the unique position of sharing building space with another high school. While this school is situated on the first floor, the other high school is on the 2nd floor, along with the cafeteria. Food service staff noticed that the inconvenient location of the cafeteria was a big obstacle to students from National Academy Foundation.

“Kids need that nourishment in the morning, so we need to do what we can.”

–Food service manager

To overcome this barrier, the school decided to set-up grab and go carts on the first floor to make breakfast more accessible to the students of National Academy Foundation High School. While some service staff remain upstairs to serve hot breakfasts to students of the other high school and some students of National Academy Foundation, one food service member carts downstairs shelf-stable boxed breakfasts and cold milk served in small jugs. The cart is stationed near the entryway of the school. This staff member checks students off the accountability form as they grab their breakfast and milk in a line past the cart. Students generally eat the breakfast in their 1st period classroom before class begins. Teachers also allow their students to eat in the first few minutes of class time. Students dispose of the meal themselves.

National Academy Foundation High School has only implemented a grab and go cart since fall of 2008 and have already seen positive increases to participation in the School Breakfast Program.

SUCCESS STORY

School: **Doris M. Johnson High School (School #426)**

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**

Grades Served: **9th – 12th**

Enrollment: **537**

Free/Reduced: **69%**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2008): **196/day**

Average Number of Breakfasts Served (Dec. 2007): **18/day**



Doris M. Johnson High School provides another example of how crucial it is to provide accessibility to breakfast through its delivery model. In efforts to expand breakfast participation at the school, administrators decided to implement a grab and go delivery method in the fall of 2008.

Before school each morning, administration at Doris M. Johnson High pick up shelf-stable boxed breakfasts and milk, organized and set aside by the food service manager. Administrators set up the grab and go cart near the main entryway of the high school and encourage students entering in to pick up a breakfast. Students who desire a breakfast grab one and are checked off the accountability sheet. Students consume the breakfasts en route to class or in the classroom prior to the start of class and dispose of the waste in the trash cans set up in the classroom. Administrators then return the remainder of the breakfasts to the cafeteria along with the accountability.

Within such a short time span, Doris M. Johnson has been able to increase participation in the school breakfast program tremendously.

Take-home lessons for grab and go breakfast:

- Ensure all school staff members are on board with the service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff.
- Encourage food service to prepare/pre-package breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Place breakfast carts/tables in high-traffic areas, particularly near school entrances.
- Run multiple points of service and only offer breakfasts in an easy to grab format.

Boxed Breakfasts

EXAMPLE

Breakfast Breaks



In October of 2008, Baltimore City Public Schools launched “Breakfast Breaks” to bridge breakfast in the city’s public schools. “Breakfast Breaks” facilitate grab and go breakfast for food service programs with all breakfast components, including whole grain cereal and 100% fruit juice, packaged in a shelf-stable box. Students are able to grab the box and a cold milk in the morning.

Created by East Side Entrees, Breakfast Breaks qualify as federally funded reimbursable meals as part of the national School Breakfast Program. Each Breakfast Break boxed meal includes a cereal bowl pack, a serving of 100% fruit juice, and another bread/grain component. Combined with a serving of milk, each Breakfast Break provides 25% or more of the recommended levels of key nutrients kids need each day. They also exceed USDA nutritional guidelines in terms of cholesterol levels and percentage of calories from fat and saturated fat. Each breakfast meal contains less than 20% of calories from fat, less than 5% from saturated fat, 25 grams or less of sugar, and essential vitamins.

For more information on how Baltimore City have utilized Breakfast Breaks and have customized the boxes to fit their needs, please contact their Food and Nutrition Services department.

Other distributors have also created similar pre-packaged breakfast boxes, such as Kellogg’s cereal.

Breakfast After 1st Period

- Breakfast served following the first instructional period provides students a nutrition break.
- Students who ate little at home may be hungry again by this time.
- A mid-morning breakfast gives students a nutritious choice versus vending machine items or a non-reimbursable milk break.

How does breakfast after 1st period work?

This model is also known as second chance breakfast where students eat breakfast during a break in the morning, after their first class. Reimbursable breakfasts are served in a grab and go fashion, often offered from mobile carts or tables located in high traffic areas as students head toward their next class. Breakfasts can either be hot or cold.

Students are responsible for throwing away their trash. Extra trash cans in the areas where students congregate between classes helps to minimize trash.

Why serve a breakfast after 1st period?

Many schools already offer a break from classes in the morning, and by serving a reimbursable meal at this time, students who were not hungry first thing in the morning or ate breakfast very early have an opportunity to eat a healthy meal. These reimbursable meals also provide a healthy option over what students may otherwise obtain from vending machines or student stores.

When does breakfast after 1st period work best?

Breakfast after 1st period seems to work particularly well in middle and high schools. Breakfast after 1st period also works best in schools with the following characteristics:

- A morning break already exists or class scheduling is flexible to incorporate one.
- There is no time to serve breakfast before classes, or participation is low in breakfast served before school delivery models.
- Students rely on vending and convenience foods from outside the school for breakfast.
- There is little or no space to serve breakfast.
- The cafeteria is centrally located.

Will breakfast after 1st period work for my school? Check YES or NO after each of the following statements.

1. There is flexible class scheduling to accommodate a breakfast break. ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Food carts are available or space exists for placement of tables in high-traffic areas. ☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Students grab soft drinks and snacks from vending machines as they rush to class. ☐ YES
☐ NO
4. The principal is open to the change. ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. Food service staff and custodial staff are willing to help with new breakfast option. ☐ YES
☐ NO
6. There are one or more areas in the building where breakfast could be distributed. ☐ YES
☐ NO
7. Meal payment system does not require cash at point of service. ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. The cafeteria is small and crowded. ☐ YES ☐ NO

GOING FURTHER

Elimination of Reduced Price Breakfast

How does the elimination of reduced price breakfast work?

By eliminating reduced price breakfasts, schools offer their students two prices for breakfast – free and full price. In this model, students who would qualify for the reduced price meal are able to receive their breakfast for free.

The school serves reimbursable breakfasts as it normally does. The only difference is that breakfast is offered at no charge to students who qualify for reduced price meals as well as those who qualify for free meals. Even though the school only uses two categories for charging students, the school still claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student.

Schools that eliminate reduced price breakfasts often see an increase in participation in the lunch program as well as in their breakfast program. By saving money at breakfast, a student is more likely to have extra money to buy lunch. Schools find that participation, and as a result, federal reimbursements, increase enough to cover the cost of serving breakfast to this group of students for free.

Why Eliminate Reduced Price Breakfasts?

Offering breakfast for free to students that qualify for reduced price meals removes any financial barrier that these students may experience. Typically students who qualify for reduced price meals still have to pay a certain amount for school breakfast and lunch. In a low-income family, these expenses may add up and become prohibitive. When you eliminate reduced price breakfasts more students participate.

When Does Eliminating Reduced Price Breakfasts Work Best?

Eliminating reduced price breakfasts works well in schools with a high percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced price meals, but have low participation of reduced price qualifying students in the breakfast program.

EXAMPLE

School System: **Washington County**

Grades served: **Pre-K – 12th**

Enrollment: **21,269 Students**

Free/Reduced: **41.2%**



Washington County has eliminated the reduced price meal category and serves breakfast for free to all students whose family income falls under 185 percent of the federal poverty level. A few years ago, Washington County noticed a significant participation different in breakfast participation in the reduced price category for students at MMFA schools vs. nonMMFA schools. This resulted in the decision to eliminate the reduced-price category mid-school year of 2002-2003. The increase in participation yielded an additional \$27,600 in federal subsidy that school year. Prior to eliminating this category during the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 12 percent of those students ate breakfast. During the 2007-2008 school year 28 percent of these students were now eating breakfast. For additional information, please contact the Food and Nutrition Services department of Washington County Schools.

Universal Free Breakfast

How does universal free breakfast work?

When Universal Free Breakfast offered, breakfast is available at no charge to all students, regardless of their household income. It is usually offered at schools that have a high percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced price meals. Because students don't need to bring cash, tickets or cards, universal free breakfast works well with the breakfast in the classroom model. However, it also works with other meal service options. Breakfast is given free to any student who wants it that day; however, the school claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student. This data is obtained from their meal applications or Direct Certification lists.

Many schools find that Universal Free Breakfast increases participation so drastically that they do not actually experience a loss from otherwise paying students. Some schools combine Universal Free Breakfast with Provision 2 or 3, which decreases the paperwork involved with offering breakfast in schools with minimal growth from year to year. Provision 2 decreases the paperwork by allowing schools to use base year eligibility data at breakfast for subsequent years when certain conditions are met. For more information on Provision 2 and related issues, please go to http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/prov-1-2-3/Prov1_2_3_FactSheet.htm.

Why serve universal free breakfast?

Universal Free Breakfast reduces the stigma attached to eating breakfast at school. It makes breakfast available to those students who may not want to participate in the program for fear of being labeled “poor.” It also removed a financial barrier to those who cannot afford the cost of a school breakfast.

When does universal free breakfast work best?

Universal free breakfast works well in schools with greater than 70-75% of students eligible for free and reduced price meals. However, schools with fewer eligible students have operated the program successfully.

EXAMPLE

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**
Grades Served: **Pre-K – 12th**
Enrollment: **83,529 students**
Free/Reduced: **72.4%**



Baltimore offers free breakfast to all of its students—regardless of income. For additional information on implementing Provision 2, please contact the Food and Nutrition Services department of Baltimore City Public Schools.

Outreach to Middle and High School Students

Unlike elementary school children, middle and high school students have more autonomy and freedom to purchase food from local corner stores and fast food restaurants each morning before arriving to school. Additionally, middle school and high school students often do not feel hungry when they first arrive at school and are more apt to feel stigma associated with school meals. Due to these factors, schools need to work extra hard to compete for older students' business. Below are some concrete suggestions to reach this challenging audience.

Get Students Involved

- Create a school breakfast advisory group. Ask the group to research student perceptions of school breakfast and the barriers to eating at school. Request that the group propose solutions and help the food service staff and school administrators implement changes.
- Have students design and administer promotional activities, posters, slogans and broadcast announcements.
- Hold taste tests for students and have them vote on their favorite breakfast items. Add these foods to the menu.
- Ask student club advisors and sports team coaches to hold their meetings in the cafeteria during breakfast if that is where it is served.
- Solicit stores or vendors to donate prizes for a monthly raffle. Allow school students to administer the raffle.

Make Breakfast More Convenient

- Institute grab and go breakfast by placing breakfast carts around the school where students hang out.
- Keep the cafeteria open later in the school day so that students who arrive later or have morning free periods can eat breakfast.

STAKEHOLDERS

Principal

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. Principals play an important role in deciding to expand the School Breakfast Program. They also lead teachers in the goal of developing successful students. Principals can influence the success of the School Breakfast Program as well as the success of their students.

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 as little as 10 minutes. Other methods allow students to eat their breakfast during a scheduled break between classes or on the way to class. If scheduling is an issue, there is almost always a method of service that can accommodate your school's needs.

COSTS: Expanding breakfast adds additional cost, but often the participation is high enough to support the program through economies of scale. Not only will there be revenue generated through participation, but federal reimbursement for breakfast can cover the additional food and/or labor costs.

RESOURCES: In Maryland, the State Department of Education administers the School Breakfast Program. The department is interested in the success of your students too and can provide support. Additional support for food service staff when expanding the School Breakfast Program is available through various organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture and the American School Food Service Association. Other schools are also a resource; talk to other school food service to see if you can emulate your peers' experiences.

School Breakfast Tips for Principals

- **Play a direct role in helping students succeed academically**
 - Implement a schedule that ensures that students have ample time and access to breakfast.
 - Affirm students for "starting smart" with a good breakfast by joining them in the morning.

"Breakfast in the classroom helps teachers too. It's the kids who don't eat who are disruptive. Also, breakfast in the classroom gives teachers time to model socialization skills for the students, which is important for children. . . Then once breakfast is over, kids are already sitting in their seats. There is no lost transitional time."

-Principal, Baltimore City

- **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.
- **Provide a key resource for parents and families**
 - Inform parents that they 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.
 - Encourage more families to complete their free and reduced meal applications.

Teachers

Teachers are important supporters in expanding the School Breakfast Program. Teachers have multiple roles within the school environment. Cited studies show that eating a healthy breakfast improves attention span, academic performance and classroom behavior. In schools that have successfully expanded the School Breakfast Program, teachers have found that concerns are easily addressed and the benefits far outweigh the costs.

A teacher may be concerned about:

TEACHER WORKLOAD: Teachers do many things besides teaching to support a successful learning environment. Studies show that school breakfast has a clear and direct impact on learning. School food service staff, janitorial staff or the students themselves, handle any additional work. Expanding breakfast would ease the teaching day.

CLASSROOM ORDER: When breakfast is served in the classroom, food service staff provides garbage bags, paper towels and other cleaning supplies for students to use. Students clean up themselves after eating their nutritious meal and are more ready to learn in the morning. The menu and methods of serving can limit both work and clean up for everyone. How to properly clean up and dispose of breakfast should be modeled first by the teacher.

TIME COMMITMENT: Studies have shown that breakfast is consumed pretty quickly. No matter what the serving method, breakfast can take as little as 2 minutes (grab and go) or 10-15 minutes (breakfast in the classroom).

Breakfast in our classroom has added a new dimension to our school day. We are able to start the day like a real family having a warm atmosphere with food, conversation and morning activities.

-Teacher, Anne Arundel

School Food Service

School food service directors and personnel are very important to the educational process. Their work completes the cycle of providing a healthy learning environment through serving school meals.

Food service staff may have concerns about:

WORKLOAD: Expanding the School Breakfast Program does not necessarily mean more work for food service personnel. When compared to lunch, breakfast can be simpler to prepare. Depending on the breakfast service method you choose, it can be set up to work with current operation with very little change. Also, prepackaged breakfast foods keep labor to a minimum.

Parents

Parents are important decision makers in the school environment. However, not every child is prepared to learn in the morning for various reasons, including lack of sleep, bussing schedules or lateness. One way to assist students and parents with a successful school day is through breakfast.

A parent may be concerned about:

CHILD ALREADY EATS AT HOME: It is great that some families eat together in morning; however, many eat unhealthy breakfasts on the run and others do not eat breakfast at all. Whether or not students have time to eat at home, the School Breakfast Program ensures a healthy option is always available.

COST: Breakfast at school is affordable. A full breakfast costs less than convenience store items. If students qualify for the lunch program, you also qualify for the breakfast program, with no additional paperwork. Payment is based upon parent income and is confidential.

CHILD NOT HUNGRY: Often, children are not hungry first thing in the morning. Children may have different hunger cycles, so they may not be ready to eat breakfast when parents are. Some of these children go to school and are ready to eat when they arrive or after 1st period. Eating school breakfast not only satisfies their hunger, but it also helps students focus during the morning school hours.

BREAKFAST ALTERNATIVE: Children, just like adults, base their food choices on what is available. They may make unhealthy choices if vending machines are the only option. Although some schools may have good breakfast vending options, these foods are often high in sugar and fat. Convenience stores and fast food locations are similar in providing high calorie choices. School breakfast is a value for parents and students alike.

BREAKFAST CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: FAQs

How can I increase breakfast participation? Students don't participate because breakfast is served too early and they don't come to school in time to eat breakfast.

Sometimes the solution is bringing breakfast to the students. Schools that have an in-classroom breakfast model generally have a higher participation than those that don't. In a study of districts with universal breakfast, the five districts that made breakfast a part of the school day served an average of 72.5 low-income students' breakfast for every 100 that ate lunch. Districts that did not include breakfast as part of the school day only served 44.2 low-income students' breakfast for every 100 that ate lunch.

- Incorporate breakfast as part of the school day through in-classroom breakfast or grab and go breakfast.
- Create a "pass" for tardy students to eat breakfast. After the third "pass," the parents or guardians are included in a discussion of the tardiness.
- Let parents know about the importance of breakfast and send constant reminders on when breakfast is served.

How do I create buy-in from my teachers for in-classroom breakfast?

Almost all teachers that have breakfast in the classroom grow to love it and don't want it taken away!

- Invite teachers from other schools to provide testimony to the positive effects of in-classroom breakfast.
- Provide teachers with breakfast in the morning to eat with their students
- Demonstrate that breakfast is a foundational tool for teachers by providing statistics on the importance of breakfast to test scores, attendance, and discipline.
- Create a section in your school newsletter that features breakfast and the benefits it provides for the students and school.

I can't do this without support from my supervisor and colleagues. How do I convince them that in-classroom breakfast is a good model?

Find out what other schools are doing so you can model that for your school.

- Talk to principals in schools where in-classroom breakfast is taking place.
- Talk to your regional food service managers about how your school can serve breakfast to more students.

My school is really old and has no working elevators. How do I serve breakfast in the classroom?

Creative solutions exist that may work for your school.

- Use the “grab and go” model where students pick up their own meals in convenient carrying cases in the cafeteria or hallway before heading up to class.
- Use community volunteers to help carry the food up to the classroom.
- Take all the dry foods up to the classroom for the entire week and only bringing up the other components each day.

Won't in-classroom breakfast lead to problems with trash and get my classrooms dirty?

Focus on the importance of breakfast as a learning tool! Studies show that in-classroom breakfast does not make a big difference in classroom cleanliness because students are quickly provided a structured routine for clean-up in the classroom.

- Get carpet sweepers for every classroom or enough to share.
- Get buckets and mops in every classroom or enough to share.
- Provide trash containers in hallways outside the classrooms for pick up.

We don't have the staffing in the school to serve in-classroom breakfast. How can we get more staff or trained volunteers to help out?

Schools with breakfast success have generally recruited and used their volunteers efficiently.

- Use students to do “community service” work and help with classroom breakfast.
- Create a “Breakfast Buddies/Club” with students or parents who will be responsible for helping with breakfast. (Participating as a volunteer can be good motivation for chronically late students).
- Create a training program for all volunteers so that they can be “certified” to help with breakfast – include parents.
- Reach out to the community, including the faith-based organizations in the area for volunteers
- Serve breakfast to all volunteers
- Use volunteers to help fill out meal applications. Make the volunteers available for parents if the parents need help (i.e. interpreters, help write up, etc.)
- Use volunteers to bag breakfast items the day before.

Documenting meals can be complicated. How do I ensure that everyone follows the rules?

This is a challenge for many schools as they make the transition from “traditional” serving methods, but the district and the state want to work with you to make it as easy as possible.

- Provide training for teachers and everyone who will be doing accountability for the meals.
- Offer frequent refresher training courses.
- Try using a share table where students can put extra food that they took. (Remember the food cannot go back to the kitchen, but could go to other places such as to the school nurse).

RESOURCES

Included in this section are miscellaneous tools to assist with your outreach. All of the following components are included on a CD included with this toolkit and are available for you to customize and utilize:

- A powerpoint presentation outlining the importance of breakfast, types of breakfast delivery models, and what your school can do to improve.

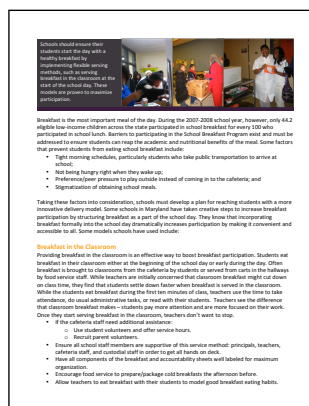
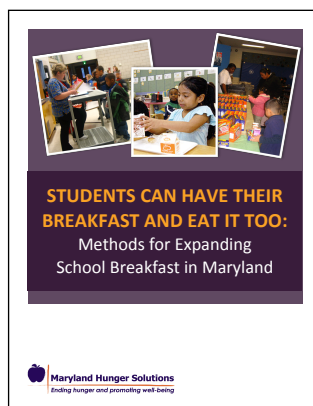


What is the School Breakfast Program?

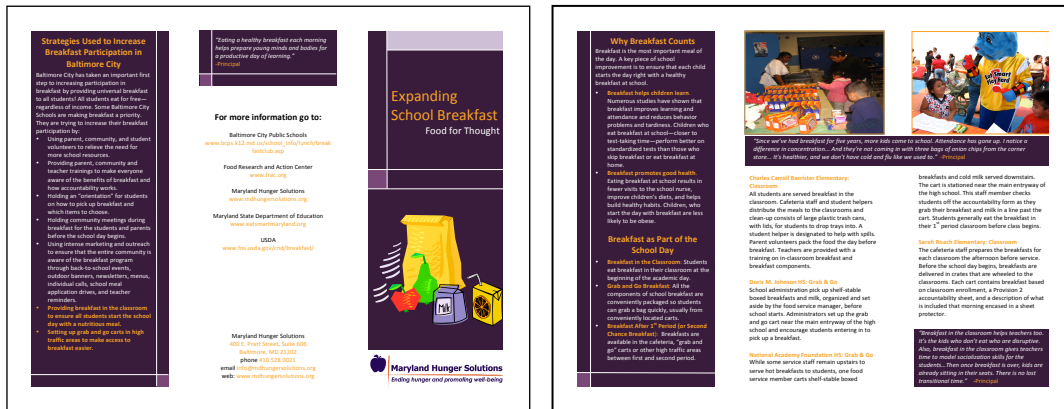
- ☐ A federally assisted school meal program dating to 1975
- ☐ Offered at public and non-profit private schools
- ☐ Provides affordable, nutritious meals



- A newsletter that details breakfast delivery types and additional strategies to ease implementation.



- A brochure that details breakfast delivery types and examples of schools that have implemented different models.



- Letters to go home with parents and to principals about expanding breakfast at your school.
- A breakfast challenge contract Food and Nutrition Services can use to promote breakfast to increase student participation.
- Contact information for each of the LEAs in Maryland
- A video documentary of one Baltimore city school's implementation of universal breakfast in the classroom.

STUDENTS CAN HAVE THEIR BREAKFAST AND EAT IT TOO: Expanding School Breakfast in Maryland



Date

What is the School Breakfast Program?

- A federally assisted school meal program dating to 1975
- Offered at public and non-profit private schools
- Provides affordable, nutritious meals



Why is school breakfast important?

Reason #1: School breakfast helps children learn.

- Prepares children's minds for learning
- Research shows that participation in school breakfast:
 - Improves test scores
 - Improves class participation and behavior
 - Reduces absenteeism
 - Reduces tardiness



Why is school breakfast important?

Reason #2: School breakfast promotes good health.

- Improves children's diets
- Helps build healthy eating habits
- Children who start the day with a good breakfast are less likely to be obese.



Have you noticed rising food prices?

- Basic food items experienced a double-digit increase in price in 2007 -- milk by 17 percent, cheese by 15 percent, and bread by 12 percent.
- Food prices are predicted to rise another 4 to 5 percent in 2008, due to global economic growth, weather, high energy costs, export restrictions and biofuels.



School Breakfast Helps Families

- Eating breakfast at school can help families save money and feed ALL children in enrolled schools.
- Morning rush means many children skip breakfast.
- Many students are not hungry first thing in the morning.



Have you noticed students coming to your classes hungry?

- There is an enormous impact on children's health and ability to learn and concentrate.
- It detract from class time.



The Big Breakfast Picture in Maryland

- Maryland can vastly improve feeding its students.
 - Only 44.2% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in the 2007-2008 year.
 - This varies widely by district.
- Breakfast brings in federal reimbursement dollars.
 - If we increased the participation rate to 60%, Maryland would receive \$7,960,685 additional federal dollars



The Bottom Line

- Many children are not getting proper nutrition to start the day and thus are not given the proper tools to succeed during the school day.
- We are losing out on millions of federal dollars.



Barriers to Increasing School Breakfast Participation

- Tight morning schedules
- Kids not being hungry right when they wake up
- Preference / peer pressure to play outside instead of coming in to the cafeteria
- Other structural constraints



Goal: Increase Participation

- Implement alternative serving methods
 - Breakfast in the classroom
 - Grab and Go
 - Breakfast after first period
- Eliminate the reduced price category
- Provision 2 – universal breakfast



Make Breakfast a Part of the School Day

- School districts that make breakfast a part of the school day (e.g., serving breakfast in the classroom) have the highest participation rates.
 - Example: Portland and Newark school districts each serve more than 90 low-income students breakfast for every 100 that receive lunch.



Breakfast in the Classroom

- Children have time after arriving at school
- Increases participation
- Reduces stigma
- Teachers can accomplish administrative tasks or nutrition education while students eat



Breakfast in the Classroom

- Planning and coordination make breakfast in the classroom run smoothly
- Important to gain support from key players such as principals, teachers, food service staff and custodians



Teachers Say

"I felt I had enough to do with preparing for teaching that to have breakfast in my classroom would just be extra work and a big mess, but I found that I barely have to do any work at all."

"The kids are so much better behaved that my lessons go much smoother."

"I would want to tell other teachers that it may seem like a hassle, but it really is minimal work with a lot of positive payoffs...I would be upset now if they took the breakfast program away."



Grab and Go

- Quick and easy
- Can reduce tardiness
- Requires minimal staff
- Unconstrained by cafeteria space



Grab and Go

- Meals prepared and packaged before start of school day
- Carts conveniently located
- Students responsible for placing trash in designated bins



Breakfast After 1st Period

- Bus schedules are not an issue
- Students enjoy breakfast
 - In the cafeteria
 - In the classroom
- A "nutrition break"



Breakfast After 1st Period

- Scheduling is important
- “Second chance” breakfast for students who miss out in the morning
- Particularly helpful in high schools where teenagers start early and don’t feel hungry until later in the day



Eliminate the Reduced Price Category

- Schools offer their students two prices for breakfast – free and full price
- Students who would qualify for the reduced price meal are able to receive their breakfast for free



Provision 2 and 3

- Allow schools to offer breakfast at no charge to all students regardless of income.



Provision 2 and 3

- Simplify paperwork
- Streamline meal service
- Give all children access to a nutritious breakfast
- Increase participation
- Reduce stigma



Provision 2 and 3

- Most useful in schools with high percentages of free and reduced price students
- Potential sources of additional funding include: state agencies, district governments, foundations



Goal: Increase Participation

Current Strategies

- [example: we’ve expanded breakfast serving times]
- [example: we post announcements in school bulletins]



Goal: Increase Participation

Challenges

- [example: participation rates are low]
- [example: need more administrative support]
- [example: kids don't have time to eat]



Goal: Increase Participation

Future Strategies

- [example: breakfast in the classroom]
- [example: meetings with key stakeholders]
- [example: send home flyers]



Next Steps



Thoughts?



Questions? Comments?

Please contact:

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info@mdhungersolutions.org





STUDENTS CAN HAVE THEIR BREAKFAST AND EAT IT TOO:

Methods for Expanding School Breakfast in Maryland



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Schools should ensure their students start the day with a healthy breakfast by implementing flexible serving methods, such as serving breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day. These models are proven to maximize participation.



Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. During the 2007-2008 school year, however, only 44.2 eligible low-income children across the state participated in school breakfast for every 100 who participated in school lunch. Barriers to participating in the School Breakfast Program exist and must be addressed to ensure students can reap the academic and nutritional benefits of the meal. Some factors that prevent students from eating school breakfast include:

- Tight morning schedules, particularly students who take public transportation to arrive at school;
- Not being hungry right when they wake up;
- Preference/peer pressure to play outside instead of coming in to the cafeteria; and
- Stigmatization of obtaining school meals.

Taking these factors into consideration, schools must develop a plan for reaching students with a more innovative delivery model. Some schools in Maryland have taken creative steps to increase breakfast participation by structuring breakfast as a part of the school day. They know that incorporating breakfast formally into the school day dramatically increases participation by making it convenient and accessible to all. Some models schools have used include:

Breakfast in the Classroom

Providing breakfast in the classroom is an effective way to boost breakfast participation. Students eat breakfast in their classroom either at the beginning of the school day or early during the day. Often breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria by students or served from carts in the hallways by food service staff. While teachers are initially concerned that classroom breakfast might cut down on class time, they find that students settle down faster when breakfast is served in the classroom. While the students eat breakfast during the first ten minutes of class, teachers use the time to take attendance, do usual administrative tasks, or read with their students. Teachers see the difference that classroom breakfast makes – students pay more attention and are more focused on their work. Once they start serving breakfast in the classroom, teachers don't want to stop.

- If the cafeteria staff need additional assistance:
 - Use student volunteers and offer service hours.
 - Recruit parent volunteers.
- Ensure all school staff members are supportive of this service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff in order to get all hands on deck.
- Have all components of the breakfast and accountability sheets well labeled for maximum organization.
- Encourage food service to prepare/package cold breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Allow teachers to eat breakfast with their students to model good breakfast eating habits.



Grab and Go Breakfast

All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can grab a bag quickly, either from the cafeteria line or from carts on school grounds. Students can eat in the cafeteria, the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds. Grab and go breakfast bags are especially convenient for middle and high schools with large numbers of students on the move. Some schools worried about the additional waste that might be produced by grab and go bags or classroom breakfast. Custodial staff at the schools, however, find that this is not the case. Special containers are available for students to throw out their trash.

- If the cafeteria staff need additional assistance:
 - Use student volunteers and offer service hours.
 - Recruit parent volunteers.
- Ensure all school staff members are supportive of this service method: principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff in order to get all hands on deck.
- Encourage food service to prepare/pre-package breakfasts the afternoon before.
- Place breakfast carts/tables in high-traffic areas, particularly near school entrances.
- Run multiple points of service and only offer breakfasts in an easy to grab format.

Breakfast After 1st Period

Because a lot of children – especially teens – do not like to eat breakfast early in the morning, schools offer a “second chance breakfast.” Breakfasts are available in the cafeteria, from “grab and go” carts in the hallway, other high traffic areas, or in the classroom. Having a second chance breakfast means that students get a healthy meal – and the energy they need to power through the rest of the morning.

While efforts such as convenient breakfast packaging and stronger marketing yield positive results, schools with the greatest successes in increasing breakfast participation are the schools that have structurally changed how breakfast is delivered to their students. Emphasis should be placed on access to breakfast through its delivery model. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom or the hallways, the flexibility to eat during the morning in school is essential to ensure optimum participation.



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Maryland Hunger Solutions, an anti-hunger and nutrition organization, is dedicated to ending hunger in Maryland by raising awareness of the problem among the public, media, and policymakers and changing policy and practice to connect struggling families to the Food Supplement Program and other federal nutrition programs.



For more information go to:

Baltimore City Public Schools

www.bcps.k12.md.us/school_info/lunch/breakfastclub.asp

Food Research and Action Center

www.frac.org

Maryland Hunger Solutions

www.mdhungersolutions.org

Maryland State Department of Education

www.eatsmartmaryland.org

USDA

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/

400 E. Pratt Street, Suite 606, Baltimore, MD 21202

phone 410.528.0021 e-mail info@mdhungersolutions.org web www.mdhungersolutions.org

An initiative of the Food Research and Action Center

Strategies Used to Increase Breakfast Participation in Baltimore City

Baltimore City has taken an important first step to increasing participation in breakfast by providing universal breakfast to all students! All students eat for free—regardless of income. Some Baltimore City Schools are making breakfast a priority. They are trying to increase their breakfast participation by:

- Using parent, community, and student volunteers to relieve the need for more school resources.
- Providing parent, community and teacher trainings to make everyone aware of the benefits of breakfast and how accountability works.
- Holding an “orientation” for students on how to pick up breakfast and which items to choose.
- Holding community meetings during breakfast for the students and parents before the school day begins.
- Using intense marketing and outreach to ensure that the entire community is aware of the breakfast program through back-to-school events, outdoor banners, newsletters, menus, individual calls, school meal application drives, and teacher reminders.
- Providing breakfast in the classroom to ensure all students start the school day with a nutritious meal.
- Setting up grab and go carts in high traffic areas to make access to breakfast easier.

“Eating a healthy breakfast each morning helps prepare young minds and bodies for a productive day of learning.”
-Principal

For more information go to:

Baltimore City Public Schools

www.bcps.k12.md.us/school_info/lunch/breakfastclub.asp

Food Research and Action Center

www.frac.org

Maryland Hunger Solutions

www.mdhungersolutions.org

Maryland State Department of Education

www.eatsmartmaryland.org

USDA

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/

Maryland Hunger Solutions

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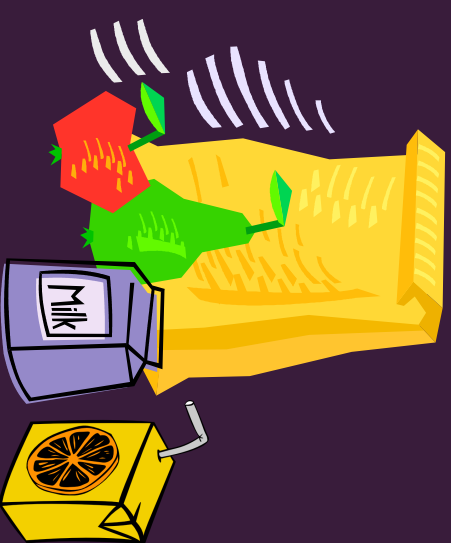
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Expanding School Breakfast Food for Thought



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Why Breakfast Counts

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A key piece of school improvement is to ensure that each child starts the day right with a healthy breakfast at school.

- **Breakfast helps children learn.** Numerous studies have shown that breakfast improves learning and attendance and reduces behavior problems and tardiness. Children who eat breakfast at school—closer to test-taking time—perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- **Breakfast promotes good health.** Eating breakfast at school results in fewer visits to the school nurse, improve children’s diets, and helps build healthy habits. Children, who start the day with breakfast are less likely to be obese.

Breakfast as Part of the School Day

- **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Students eat breakfast in their classroom at the beginning of the academic day.
- **Grab and Go Breakfast:** All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can grab a bag quickly, usually from conveniently located carts.
- **Breakfast After 1st Period (or Second Chance Breakfast):** Breakfasts are available in the cafeteria, “grab and go” carts or other high traffic areas between first and second period.



“Since we’ve had breakfast for five years, more kids come to school. Attendance has gone up. I notice a difference in concentration... And they’re not coming in with three bags of onion chips from the corner store... It’s healthier, and we don’t have cold and flu like we used to.” -Principal



Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary: Classroom

All students are served breakfast in the classroom. Cafeteria staff and student helpers distribute the meals to the classrooms and clean-up consists of large plastic trash cans, with lids, for students to drop trays into. A student helper is designated to help with spills. Parent volunteers pack the food the day before breakfast. Teachers are provided with a training on in-classroom breakfast and breakfast components.

Doris M. Johnson HS: Grab & Go

School administration pick up shelf-stable boxed breakfasts and milk, organized and set aside by the food service manager, before school starts. Administrators set up the grab and go cart near the main entryway of the high school and encourage students entering in to pick up a breakfast.

National Academy Foundation HS: Grab & Go

While some service staff remain upstairs to serve hot breakfasts to students, one food service member carts shelf-stable boxed

breakfasts and cold milk served downstairs. The cart is stationed near the main entryway of the high school. This staff member checks students off the accountability form as they grab their breakfast and milk in a line past the cart. Students generally eat the breakfast in their 1st period classroom before class begins.

Sarah Roach Elementary: Classroom

The cafeteria staff prepares the breakfasts for each classroom the afternoon before service. Before the school day begins, breakfasts are delivered in crates that are wheeled to the classrooms. Each cart contains breakfast based on classroom enrollment, a Provision 2 accountability sheet, and a description of what is included that morning encased in a sheet protector.

“Breakfast in the classroom helps teachers too. It’s the kids who don’t eat who are disruptive. Also, breakfast in the classroom gives teachers time to model socialization skills for the students... Then once breakfast is over, kids are already sitting in their seats. There is no lost transitional time.” -Principal

Date

Dear Parents:

This year, we are evaluating our community to make sure all of our students are fully prepared for academic success. As we all recognize that hungry children cannot learn, the first step is ensuring that all students begin the school day with a nutritious breakfast at home or at school.

The School Breakfast Program is available to all students every weekday morning. No advanced registration is necessary; your child can attend every day or only occasionally. These supervised meals provide your child with $\frac{1}{4}$ of their nutritional needs each day. School breakfast is tasty and nutritious.

School Breakfast is an ideal solution on mornings when kids are running late or parents have early commitments. Whatever the reason, if breakfast at home is not convenient, please take advantage of breakfast here at school. <Insert more details about the delivery method, price, time, etc.>

Thank you for helping us make sure that all of our students start the school day alert, well fed and ready to learn.

Sincerely,

Principal

Date

Dear Principal:

Research shows that offering breakfast at school results in increased math and reading scores, fewer nurses' office visits, improve classroom behavior, improved attentiveness, decreased student absences and tardiness, and overall improved performance. Let's take advantage of the benefits of school breakfast by increasing student participation. While most schools traditionally offer breakfast prior to the start of the school day in the classroom, barriers to participation exist. Many schools around the state have succeeded in eliminating these barriers by changing how breakfast is delivered to their students.

There are a number of models that schools can develop to expand school breakfast participation. Some include:

- Extended breakfast periods before school.
- In-classroom breakfast.
- "Grab and go" carts in the hallways or other locations in addition to the cafeteria.
- Multi-serving site plans with in-classroom for some grades, cafeteria service for other grades, and grab and go for other grades.
- "Second chance" breakfast served between first and second periods.
- Any combination of these or your own ideas that result in a plan that works for your individual school and your students.

Make school breakfast a strategy for school improvement in your school.

Your school can expand breakfast without financially burdening the school food service program. Schools can choose what they charge for breakfast based on their costs; they usually charge less than a dollar. USDA provides reimbursement for every breakfast served. Breakfast meals take little or no labor and can increase the productivity of the food service staff.

For the health and well-being of your students, expand the School Breakfast Program in your school. Students need access to a nutritious breakfast every day.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

Breakfast in Baltimore CHALLENGE

To: School Leaders

From: Food and Nutrition Services

Date: <Insert Date>

There is strong commitment from Baltimore City Public Schools System to ensure that students in Baltimore eat breakfast because research shows that offering breakfast at school results in increased math and reading scores, fewer nurses' office visits, improve classroom behavior, improved attentiveness, decreased student absences and tardiness, and overall improved performance. Baltimore City has a universal breakfast program. All students in Baltimore eat for free every day. Our goal is to increase participation for school breakfast and will be launching a district-wide competition for schools to make school breakfast a strategy for school improvement. The school with the highest participation for <insert time period> will receive <insert prize>. <Insert additional terms and condition>

By signing and returning this contract, you accept the Breakfast in Baltimore Challenge and will aim to increase breakfast participation for the 2008-2009 school year.

Please select your school's breakfast delivery model (all that apply):

_____ **Classroom Breakfast:** Breakfast items will be taken to the classroom by school and cafeteria staff and served to the students in the classroom under supervision of the teacher.

_____ **Grab and Go (Cafeteria):** Students will come to the cafeteria to pick up their pre-bagged breakfast and take it to the classroom to eat under the supervision of their teacher.

_____ **Grab and Go (Entrance):** Students will pick up pre-bagged breakfast from carts in the hallway/entrance and take their breakfast to the classroom to eat under the supervision of their teacher.

_____ **Traditional School Breakfast:** Students will come to the cafeteria to pick up their breakfast and eat their breakfast in the cafeteria. (This will require additional outreach because less students use this method of delivery)

Outreach items and additional support will be provided by Food and Nutrition Services if requested.

School: _____

Principal's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Maryland Food and Nutrition Services Directors

Allegany County

Board of Education of Allegany County

Supervisor/Title: Steven Wilson, Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Services

Email: srwilson@allconet.org

Phone: (301) 722-0636

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Address: P.O. Box 1724, Cumberland, MD 21502-1724

Anne Arundel County

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

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Address: 2666 Riva Road, Annapolis, MD 21401

Baltimore City

Baltimore City Public Schools

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Baltimore County Public Schools

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Carroll County Public Schools

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Address: 125 N Court Street, Westminster, MD 21157

Cecil County

Cecil County Public Schools

Supervisor/Title: Kathy Thomas, Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Department

Email: kthomas@ccps.org

Phone: (410) 996-5410

Fax: (410) 996-5006

Address: 801 Elkton Boulevard, Elkton, MD 21921

Charles County

Charles County Public Schools

Supervisor/Title: Patrick Tague, Supervisor of Food Service

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Fax: (301) 392-5579

Address: P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646 or 1000 Radio Station Rd., La Plata, MD 20646

Dorchester County

Dorchester County Board of Education

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Frederick County

Frederick County Board of Education

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Garrett County

Garrett County Board of Education
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Fax: (301) 334-7621
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Harford County

Harford County Public Schools
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Howard County

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Kent County

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Fax: (410) 778-1705
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Prince George's County

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Washington County Board of Education

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Wicomico County

Wicomico County Board of Education

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Maryland State Department of Education

School and Community Nutrition Programs

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Fax: (410) 333-2635

Address: 200 W Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Some additional resources that may assist with your school's expansion are included in the *Additional Resources* folder on this toolkit's CD.

- *Breakfast in Maryland Counties*, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Provides county-by-county comparison and analysis of school breakfast participation in Maryland.
- *Maryland Meals for Achievement Findings*, Maryland State Department of Education
Summarizes the findings from year 3 of the Maryland Meals for Achievement classroom breakfast pilot program.
- *Breakfast for Learning*, Food Research and Action Center
Aggregates research proving the benefits of school breakfast.
- *Expanding the Reach of School Breakfast*, Food Research and Action Center
Briefly describes strategies for boosting participation in the School Breakfast Program
- *Provision 2*, Food Research and Action Center
Explains the provision in the federal School Breakfast Program that reduces paperwork and allows schools to provide universal breakfast to its students.

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Policy Brief: Breakfast in Maryland's Counties

October 2008

Breakfast in Maryland's Counties: Summary

- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for children, but only 43.7 eligible low-income Maryland children participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 who participated in the National School Lunch Program during the 2007-2008 school year.
- Participation varied widely from county to county, from a high of 70.88 percent in Somerset County to a low of 20.39 percent in Howard County.
- Counties with smaller populations had a greater percentage of schools participating in Maryland Meals for Achievement – a very successful state program that supports breakfast in the classroom initiatives – and had higher participation rates in school breakfast as a result.
- Maryland should considerably increase funding for Maryland Meals for Achievement to allow more schools to participate.
- Even without more or adequate state funding for this initiative, however, many schools can use federal School Breakfast Program funds to implement programs, such as serving breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day or offering “grab and go” carts in the hallways, that are proven to boost participation.

Introduction

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day – especially for learning, but also for supporting health and preventing obesity. A key piece of boosting children's well-being and improving schools is to ensure that each child can start the day right with a healthy breakfast at school.

- **Breakfast helps children learn.** Numerous studies show that breakfast improves learning and attendance, and reduces absenteeism, behavior problems and tardiness. Children who eat breakfast at school – doser to test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- **Breakfast promotes good health.** Eating breakfast at school results in fewer visits to the school nurse, improves children's diets, reduces absenteeism, and helps build healthy eating habits. Children who start the day with a good breakfast are less likely to be obese.

Yet, many children skip breakfast because their families struggle to put a meal on the table. In 2007, 10.5 percent of Maryland's children lived in poverty. For children living in these households, a filling, nutritious meal every morning is often beyond their parents' ability to provide. For others, eating breakfast is a matter of time, not money. As the

2007-2008 School Year Students Participating in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) per 100 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

County	Ratio
TOP FIVE	
Somerset	70.88
Dorchester	70.87
Kent	67.89
Washington	66.93
Allegany	58.93
BOTTOM FIVE	
Baltimore City	37.73
Calvert	32.82
Charles	32.05
Carroll	27.13
Howard	20.39

Based on Maryland State Department of Education, 2007-2008 school year data, September – May breakfast and lunch meal counts. Calculations by Maryland Hunger Solutions.

demands on working parents have grown, and parents face longer commutes or jobs with nontraditional work hours, sitting down to a healthy breakfast is rare for many families. And, many children do not have an appetite when they first start the day, so skipping breakfast becomes an unhealthy routine for many.

The benefits of breakfast are evident, but too many children in Maryland miss out on a healthy start to their day. During the 2007-2008 school year, only 43.7 eligible low-income children across the state participated in school breakfast for

every 100 who participated in school lunch. By county, the results varied widely. Howard County had just 20.4 percent of eligible children participating, while 70.88 percent in Somerset County participated.

Because eating breakfast is essential to children’s ability to learn, stay healthy, and behave in school, it is vital to monitor how well schools, school districts, counties, and the state as a whole are doing in reaching students, especially low-income students, with school breakfast.

In a time when families are struggling with rising food costs and a weakened economy, expanding the reach of the School Breakfast Program in Maryland not only can reduce hunger and boost learning among low-income children, it can help struggling families and allow the state to access more federal dollars.

Key Findings

In the 2007-2008 school year, almost 91,000 low-income children in Maryland participated in the national School Breakfast Program on an average school day. When children who paid for their meals (as do households with income above 185 percent of the federal poverty level) are included, total participation rose to nearly 130,000 children on an average morning.

When compared against school lunch participation in Maryland, however, breakfast participation fell far short. Because there is very broad participation in the National School Lunch Program, Maryland Hunger Solutions uses it as a benchmark against which to measure participation in

2007-2008 School Year Top Five Counties in Lost Federal Funds: Amounts Forgone Because Counties Fall Short of Reaching 70 Free and Reduced Price (F&RP) Students in the School Breakfast Program per 100 F&RP Students in National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

County	Additional Students Who Would Be Served	Dollars Lost
Baltimore City	13,117	\$2,834,140
Prince George’s	12,549	\$2,705,473
Montgomery	7,410	\$1,597,494
Baltimore	6,591	\$1,435,962
Anne Arundel	2,468	\$ 543,237

Based on Maryland State Department of Education, 2007-2008 school year data, September – May breakfast and lunch meal counts. Calculations by Maryland Hunger Solutions.

school breakfast. During the 2007-2008 school year, 43.7 low-income students received free or reduced price school breakfast for every 100 that received free or reduced price school lunch. While the state’s breakfast participation rate has followed the national trend and slowly risen over the last five years, Maryland has consistently remained below the national participation rate each year.

In counties across the state, the rate of student participation in the School Breakfast Program varied widely. Ten counties reached at least 50 of their eligible low-income children with breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, with Dorchester County and Somerset County reaching nearly 70 children for every 100 eating lunch.

Participation in many counties lagged badly, with the bottom five counties all serving fewer than 40 eligible low-income children for every 100 eating lunch. Four of these counties –

The Basics of School Breakfast

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 Maryland State Department of Education. The federal government provides reimbursements to local school food authorities for each breakfast served. During the 2007-2008 school year, schools were reimbursed \$1.35 for each free breakfast served; \$1.05 for each reduced-price breakfast served; and \$0.24 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 \$0.26 in federal funding for each free or reduced-price breakfast served.

Any public school, nonprofit private school or residential child care institution can participate. 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 cross-certified by their eligibility in another means-tested program, to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. Based on their family income, children fall into one of three groups:

- Free*: Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level eat at no cost to their families.
- Reduced-Price*: Children from families with incomes between 130 percent (currently \$22,321 for a family of three) and 185% (\$31,765 for a family of three) of poverty can be charged no more than \$.30 per breakfast.
- Paid: Children with family incomes above 185 percent of the federal poverty level pay for most of the cost of their meals at rates set by the schools.

*Students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals are considered “low-income” in this report.

Calvert, Charles, Carroll and Howard – served fewer than 35 low-income children breakfast for every 100 eating lunch. These four counties also had some of the highest median incomes in 2007 and are among the wealthiest in the country. Since we are measuring their relative ability to reach their low-income children, however, their affluence does not explain poor participation rates.

Low participation in the School Breakfast Program has real consequences, both for the children who are not receiving a healthy meal and for education budgets. In 2007-2008, Maryland schools lost \$1.35 every day in federal funding for every child who would have received a free breakfast and \$1.05 for every child who would have received a reduced-price breakfast, but was not served. If those children attended a “severe” need school – one in which at least 40 percent of lunches served were free or reduced-price – an additional \$0.26 per child was forfeited.

Those meals add up to millions of dollars in federal child nutrition funding going unclaimed by Maryland every year.

In the 2007-2008 school year, if Maryland reached a reasonable target of 70 children eating breakfast for every 100 eating lunch, almost 55,000 more children would have received a healthy school breakfast every day, and Maryland would have received an additional \$11.8 million in federal child nutrition funding (not counting additional “severe need” funds). Most of this money was lost by the counties with larger populations. Five areas around the state – Baltimore City, Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County – together lost more than \$9 million.

The Impact of Maryland Meals for Achievement

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) is an important state-funded breakfast program. First started in 1998 in several Maryland elementary schools, MMFA allows schools to offer breakfast for free to all students in the classroom regardless of their family income. MMFA in-classroom breakfast increases breakfast participation among all students, but most importantly among those eligible for free

2007-2008 School Year Low-Income Student Participation in Free and Reduced-Price (F&RP) School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast (SBP)

County	F&RP* SBP Students	F&RP NSLP Students	F&RP Students in SBP per 100 in NSLP	Rank in State	Additional Low-Income Students in Breakfast if 70 per 100 in Lunch	Additional Federal Funding if 70 Low-Income Breakfast Students per 100 Receiving Lunch
Allegany	2,130	3,614	58.93	5	400	\$84,499
Anne Arundel	4,925	10,561	46.63	12	2,468	\$543,237
Baltimore	11,858	26,355	44.99	14	6,591	\$1,435,962
Calvert	550	1,677	32.82	21	623	\$134,733
Caroline	825	1,875	44.00	15	487	\$105,325
Carroll	650	2,396	27.13	23	1,027	\$221,880
Cecil	1,797	3,289	54.63	7	505	\$110,253
Charles	1,475	4,604	32.05	22	1,747	\$379,463
Dorchester	1,256	1,772	70.87	2	N/A	N/A
Frederick	2,363	5,146	45.92	13	1,239	\$258,157
Garrett	796	1,463	54.40	8	228	\$47,646
Harford	2,810	6,422	43.76	16	1,685	\$361,200
Howard	961	4,710	20.39	24	2,336	\$505,132
Kent	489	721	67.89	3	15	\$3,335
Montgomery	11,166	26,536	42.08	19	7,410	\$1,597,494
Prince George's	20,610	47,370	43.51	17	12,549	\$2,705,473
Queen Anne's	390	918	42.47	18	253	\$52,895
St. Mary's	1,563	2,822	55.41	6	412	\$88,259
Somerset	855	1,206	70.88	1	N/A	N/A
Talbot	474	932	50.83	10	179	\$38,165
Washington	3,985	5,954	66.93	4	183	\$39,770
Wicomico	2,724	5,258	51.80	9	957	\$212,180
Worcester	829	1,702	48.68	11	363	\$79,222
Baltimore City	15,337	40,648	37.73	20	13,117	\$2,834,140
State Total	90,815	207,950	43.70		54,774	\$11,832,420

* F&RP stands for Free and Reduced-Price.

Based on Maryland State Department of Education, 2007-2008 school year data, September – May breakfast and lunch meal counts and days of service. Calculations by Maryland Hunger Solutions.

2007-2008 Maryland Meals for Achievement Program

District	Total Number of Schools in District	Number of Schools Eligible for MMFA	Number of Schools Participating in MMFA	Percent of Schools Eligible for MMFA	Percent of Eligible Schools Participating in MMFA	Percent of All Schools Participating in MMFA
Allegany	24	19	9	79.17%	47.37%	37.50%
Anne Arundel	118	25	17	21.19%	68.00%	14.41%
Baltimore	164	71	23	43.29%	32.39%	14.02%
Calvert	23	0	0	0.00%	N/A	0.00%
Caroline	11	7	3	63.64%	42.86%	27.27%
Carroll	41	1	1	2.44%	100.00%	2.44%
Cecil	30	7	7	23.33%	100.00%	23.33%
Charles	35	6	4	17.14%	66.67%	11.43%
Dorchester	13	8	6	61.54%	75.00%	46.15%
Frederick	65	6	6	9.23%	100.00%	9.23%
Garrett	16	10	7	62.50%	70.00%	43.75%
Harford	55	7	6	12.73%	85.71%	10.91%
Howard	71	1	1	1.41%	100.00%	1.41%
Kent	8	4	4	50.00%	100.00%	50.00%
Montgomery	209	61	29	29.19%	47.54%	13.88%
Prince George's	214	141	24	65.89%	17.02%	11.21%
Queen Anne's	14	2	2	14.29%	100.00%	14.29%
St. Mary's	24	6	5	25.00%	83.33%	20.83%
Somerset	8	7	4	87.50%	57.14%	50.00%
Talbot	11	1	1	9.09%	100.00%	9.09%
Washington	43	19	16	44.19%	84.21%	37.21%
Wicomico	26	18	5	69.23%	27.78%	19.23%
Worcester	19	7	4	36.84%	57.14%	21.05%
Baltimore City	203	197	9	97.04%	4.57%	4.43%
State Total*	1445	631	193	43.67%	30.59%	13.36%

Based on Maryland State Department of Education Free and Reduced Price enrollment data as of October 31, 2006. Calculations by Maryland Hunger Solutions.
www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/docs/Free+and+Reduced-Price+Meal+Data

*Does not include non-public schools

and reduced-price meals. It plays a considerable role in improving children's learning and achievement.

Maryland Meals for Achievement was legislated after private foundations, including The Abell Foundation, studied the impact of serving breakfast in the classroom at the beginning of the school day to all students regardless of family income. The study demonstrated a dramatic increase in breakfast participation – from about 18 percent before the pilot began to 85 percent within two months of serving breakfast in the classroom.

The initiative sought to reduce the stigma children may feel about participating in a program that's seen as only "for poor kids" by serving breakfast to all students, and it sought to make it easier to serve breakfast to students who may have been unable to participate in the cafeteria before the school day began by serving breakfast in the classroom early in the school day. An evaluation by researchers from Harvard University found that MMFA schools reported a decrease in

tardiness and suspensions and an increase in Maryland School Performance Program (MSPAP) scores and grades.

Schools with more than 40 percent free and reduced-price meal enrollment can apply for the limited state MMFA funding. The state seeks applications from all schools that are eligible. Factors taken into consideration include geographic diversity and varying rates of free and reduced price school enrollment. The state provides funding to the schools for the meal costs or proportion of meal costs that are not reimbursed by the federal government. For the 2007-2008 school year, 196 schools across Maryland were funded to participate in the MMFA program.

Counties with a higher percentage of MMFA schools also tend to have higher general breakfast participation. Somerset, Dorchester, Kent, Washington and Allegany counties had the highest breakfast participation rates and had MMFA programs in more than one-third of their schools. In a number of smaller counties, all of their schools eligible

for the MMFA program participated in the program. Larger counties were more likely to have a lower percentage of eligible schools that participated in MMFA.

The benefits of MMFA are clear – higher breakfast participation and a positive impact on education. Across the state, more than 630 schools were eligible for MMFA in theory for the 2007-2008 school year, but the state funding level did not cover all of these schools. For the 2008-2009 school year, the program was funded at \$3.1 million dollars – enough funding to cover just one-third of eligible schools. Moreover, because of the state's budget deficit, the Maryland Board of Public Works recently approved the governor's proposed budget cuts, which included a 10 percent cut to the MMFA program for the 2008-2009 school year.

These cuts are alarming not only because of the harm to children but because funding for MMFA yields a significant return on investment to the state. As the Maryland State Department of Education projected costs to the state against the federal school breakfast reimbursements coming into the state for each school receiving MMFA, they determined that for every \$1 that the state invested in MMFA, the state received more than \$3 in federal school breakfast reimbursements.

Increasing Breakfast Participation in Schools without MMFA

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) does not reach all the schools that need it. However, school district officials that are committed to increasing breakfast participation can still use the lessons learned from the MMFA experience. Schools can implement universal breakfast programs (breakfast at no cost to all students) and offer breakfast in

the classroom – strategies proven to boost breakfast participation.

Schools that serve a large percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced school meals can break even when they serve breakfast at no charge to all students – even without MMFA. The increased participation brings in a sufficient amount of revenue to cover the additional costs.

School districts also may want to consider offering meals for free to students who are eligible for reduced price meals. Washington County has eliminated the reduced price meal category and serves breakfast for free to all students whose family income falls under 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Prior to eliminating this category during the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 12 percent of those students ate breakfast. During the 2007-2008 school year 28 percent of these students were eating breakfast. Although a small change, this has made it easier for more students to eat breakfast in Washington County.

Additionally, schools can use methods such as "grab and go" where meals are served from the hallway or cafeteria and then taken to the classroom or (especially in high schools during breaks) to common areas to be eaten. Anne Arundel County has instituted "Breakfast with Class" for some of their schools that were not eligible for Maryland Meals for Achievement. "Breakfast with Class" is an innovative breakfast delivery program that allows students to receive breakfast in the cafeteria but eat breakfast in the classroom. During the allotted time set for school breakfast, students stream through the cafeteria serving line with personal bags in which to place their breakfast items. Students still pay according to eligibility. They then bring

Baltimore City: A District Nutrition Program in Transition

During the 2007-2008 school year, Baltimore City began offering universal breakfast (in which all children, regardless of income, can eat at no cost) to reach more children with a healthy morning meal. Despite making this improvement, Baltimore continued to have a low rate of breakfast participation. After a breakfast to lunch ratio of 37.7:100 during the 2007-2008 school year, Baltimore City school officials were eager to take added steps to grow participation and feed all of their students.

During the 2008-2009 school year, Baltimore City schools and the new Food and Nutrition Director, Anthony Geraci, began working with the community, the state, local businesses and the anti-hunger community to make Baltimore a model for school breakfast. With grant assistance funded by an alliance including East Side Entrees, the Clinton Global Initiative, the "got breakfast?" Foundation, the National Dairy Council and other food suppliers, Baltimore City is focusing on ways to boost participation by introducing new breakfast packages and intense marketing to help turn the participation rate around. School officials started the year with several media events that highlighted breakfast in the schools. They have also started marketing "breakfast boxes" that include incentives to encourage students to eat breakfast. Additionally, the district is reaching out to school principals around the city to support them in using innovative ways to serve breakfast that will increase participation.

With these efforts, Baltimore City has significant potential to deliver breakfast to a large number of low-income students.

their bags to their classrooms and eat breakfast in the classroom. Teachers also are offered breakfast and are encouraged to join with their students. Anne Arundel has seen higher breakfast participation rates for schools that have “Breakfast with Class” than schools that do not.

Recommendations

Schools should make increased availability and participation in school breakfast one of their highest priorities in order to reduce hunger and support the educational and health 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 who are struggling to make ends meet. School breakfast programs make critical contributions to children’s nutrition, education and health.

Maryland should increase funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement in-classroom breakfast program to serve more schools. MMFA has demonstrated its success by increasing breakfast participation among all students, but most importantly those eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Schools should ensure their students start the day with a healthy breakfast by implementing universal breakfast programs (breakfast at no cost to all students) and flexible

serving methods, such as serving breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day or offering “grab and go” carts in the hallways. These models are proven to maximize participation by low-income students. It is possible for some schools that serve a large percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced school meals to break even when they serve breakfast at no charge to all students – even without MMFA. The increased participation brings in a sufficient amount of revenue to cover the additional costs.

District leaders should support and provide leadership in implementing programs. When district leaders put their full support behind a universal breakfast program with alternative service strategies, participation reaches its fullest potential.

School districts, anti-hunger organizations and state agencies should collaborate to provide the technical assistance and support that schools need to maximize breakfast participation.

To meet this goal, Maryland Hunger Solutions can share best practices and help develop a breakfast service model that will work in each school. Visit Maryland Hunger Solutions’ Web site www.mdhungersolutions.org.

Resources

Maryland Hunger Solutions, an anti-hunger and nutrition organization, is dedicated to ending hunger in Maryland by raising awareness of the problem among the public, media, and policymakers, and changing policy and practice to connect struggling families to the School Breakfast Program and other federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions is an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center.

www.mdhungersolutions.org

The Food Research and Action Center, a national anti-hunger nonprofit organization, has information and resources on the School Breakfast Program and other federal nutrition programs, including state-by-state data and a toolkit on ways to expand breakfast participation.

www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/sbp.html

The Maryland State Department of Education’s Eat Smart Maryland Web site has an overview of the child nutrition programs available to state residents, including school breakfast.

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/

USDA has a toolkit for schools and advocates to help start and maintain successful breakfast programs.

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/toolkit

The National Dairy Council’s Nutrition Explorations Web site has information on the School Breakfast program, including helpful suggestions on how to start up a program.

www.nutritionexplorations.org/sfs/programs_breakfast.asp

Acknowledgements

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Classroom Breakfast Scores High in Maryland

Findings from Year III of the Maryland Meals for Achievement Classroom Breakfast Pilot Program
December 2001



Thousands of Maryland school children have a new tool to help them do their best work at school each day – a healthy breakfast, served right in their classroom.

Schools that participate in the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) classroom breakfast pilot program offer breakfast to every student every morning at no charge, regardless of family income. Students eat at their desks while teachers take attendance and do other morning activities. The program started in 1998 with only six schools. By the start of the 2001-2002 school year, more than 90 schools were participating.

This innovative program continues to earn high scores from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School researchers. Here's a look at their most recent findings¹.

Tardiness Declines

Researchers report an 8% decline in tardiness in MMFA schools during the first three full months of the school year.

Suspensions Decrease

Suspensions were down from an average of 4.4 days per month to 2.8 per month in MMFA schools three months after the start of classroom breakfast. That's a decrease of 1.6 days per month per school.

Impact on Academics

Researchers report that Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) Composite Index scores (a score that averages all students across all grades and all subjects) improved significantly more in

MMFA schools than in a matched group of comparison schools from the same school systems. MMFA schools saw a five-point increase in the percentage of students who scored at or above the satisfactory level. Meanwhile, comparison schools had a slight, but not significant, decline in the number of students scoring at or above the satisfactory level.

Researchers noted similar trends when they examined individual student performance in individual subject areas, although these findings did not reach statistical significance.

It is important to note that the sample size for this measurement was small. When researchers have an opportunity to evaluate data from a larger group of schools, the impact of MMFA on academics may become even more clear.

Investment in Good Nutrition Pays Off Now and Later

As researchers continue to point to the link between good nutrition and education, it becomes clear that in the short-term, MMFA schools can expect to see improved academic performance and behavior in participating schools. Looking ahead, students who routinely start their day with a good breakfast will learn healthy eating habits that will serve them for a lifetime. This long-term benefit cannot be understated during a time when childhood obesity and inactivity are at alarmingly high rates in our country.



¹All findings cited from J. M. Murphy et al., Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report, October 2001.

Staff Report Positive Changes

Some of the most compelling information about MMFA comes from the people who see it in action each day. Teachers, principals, nurses, and guidance counselors all report positive changes following the start of classroom breakfast in their schools.

Learning Environment

More than eight out of ten school staff members surveyed reported that the school learning environment had improved as a result of MMFA.



Student Behavior

Staff also believe the program helps to improve student behavior. Seventy-two percent of the staff members surveyed in first-year MMFA schools said they felt student behavior improved following the start of classroom breakfast.

Student Attentiveness

Seventy-three percent of staff surveyed in first-year MMFA schools reported an improvement in student attentiveness following the start of the program.

Benefits Aren't Only for First-Year Schools

Researchers noted that staff continued to report improvements in learning environment, behavior, and attentiveness during the second and third years of the program. For example, schools that have had MMFA the longest have the highest percentage of staff reporting a positive

change in learning environment. This feedback suggests that the benefits of classroom breakfast persist and, in some cases, increase over time.

When asked about the future of MMFA, 91% of staff surveyed said the program should continue in their school. The highest approval ratings came from the schools that have had the program the longest. Among these schools, 94% of staff reported that the program should continue.

One teacher reported that MMFA gives her a chance to assess the class before instruction begins. "It is a time to interact with the kids and to really know what is going on at home. It gives you a chance, if you had a problem with a child the day before to get him/her set on the right track for that day."

Another teacher who had been worried about the additional responsibilities said that MMFA is definitely worth the effort.

"I would be upset now if they took the breakfast program away."

-- teacher

"I felt I had enough to do with preparing for teaching that to have breakfast in my classroom would just be extra work and a big mess," the teacher explained. "But I found that I barely have to do any work at all, and the kids are so much better behaved that my lessons go much smoother. I would want to tell other teachers that it may seem like a

hassle, but it really is minimal work with a lot of positive payoffs....I would be upset now if they took the breakfast program away.”

One principal describes the program this way:

“It lets them concentrate and learn.”

-- principal

“The classroom breakfast program has given my children...three things: one – it gets my babies to school on time, two – it puts food into their tummies, and three – it lets them concentrate and learn.”

Another principal reported just after the start of the program that MMFA has “greatly enhanced the educational environment” in her school. She credited MMFA with improving attendance, decreasing tardiness and discipline referrals, and helping students to be more alert.

Program Also Earns High Marks from Parents and Students

Parents

Ninety-nine percent of parents who responded to the survey said the program had helped their family. When asked what kind of impact the program has had, frequent responses included providing a good start to the day for children, improved attention and learning among students, and relief to parents’ worries about children getting breakfast. Nearly one in four parents reported that MMFA makes mornings easier at home.

Students

Does MMFA make the grade with students? Absolutely. Of more than 1,000 students surveyed, 81% said they like classroom breakfast.

When asked what difference MMFA makes in their school, the most common responses are that classroom breakfast provides an opportunity for everyone to eat and that fewer students are hungry. Some students mention that they enjoy the opportunity to eat with their friends and get to know their teachers better.

One third-grader said she likes the program because she doesn’t have to rush around at home trying to squeeze in breakfast. “Having breakfast at school every days helps me because I won’t have to be hungry during language arts,” she explained.

More Students Eat

Schools that participate in MMFA see a dramatic increase in the number of students who eat breakfast at school. The statewide average daily participation for School Breakfast is about 11%. That means about one in ten students makes the trip to the cafeteria for breakfast. These students may or may not pay for their meals, depending on their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. In MMFA schools, participation averages 72% and some schools see participation soar as high as 90%.



The Classroom Component Is Critical

One reason more students eat is because they don't have to pay for their meal. But it's certainly not the only reason. In fact, researchers suggest that the classroom component is what makes this program so successful. In fact, related research in Baltimore City showed only a modest 5% increase in the school breakfast participation rate for schools that offered breakfast at no charge in the cafeteria. The Baltimore City schools that offered breakfast at no charge in the classroom saw participation triple.

Why? Lots of reasons. When students eat at their desks, they don't have to juggle coats, book bags, and a cafeteria tray. They don't

“Having breakfast at school every day helps me because I won't have to be hungry during language arts.”
-- student

have to rush through their meal to get back to homeroom. Instead, they have an opportunity to sit quietly at their desks, talk with their teacher and classmates, and get ready for the morning's lessons.

MMFA Serves a Diverse Group of Children

Students from 15 school systems across Maryland participated in MMFA during the 2000-2001 school year. These students represent a mix of cultures and economic backgrounds. Some live in rural areas, while others live in or near cities. By law, schools must have at least 40% of their enrolled students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Free and reduced-price eligibility of MMFA schools ranges from just over 40% to nearly 100%.

What's on the Menu

Each school serves meals that meet U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition standards consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Recommended Dietary Allowances for children. Menus vary from school to school, but



generally include milk, juice or fruit, and an entrée such as a muffin, bagel, cereal, French toast sticks, or breakfast sandwich. Many schools offer a hot entrée at least occasionally.

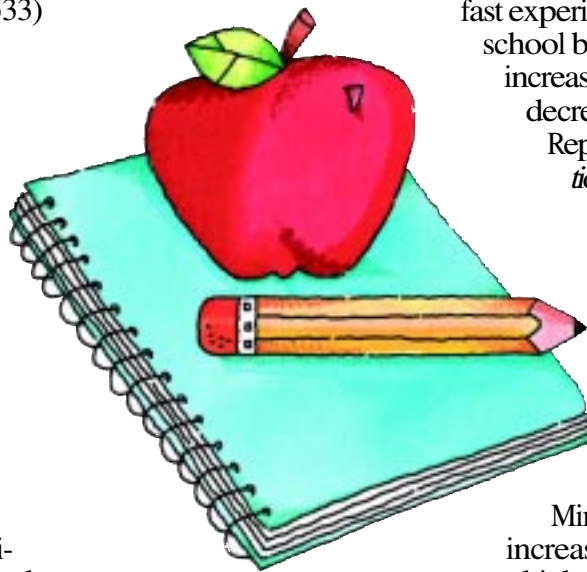
Paying the Bill

State lawmakers provided \$964,000 to fund MMFA for the 2000-2001 school year. The State appropriated nearly \$2 million for the 2001-2002 school year, to provide for the program in more than 90 schools statewide. MMFA funds supplement federal and state funds provided under the traditional School Breakfast Program. Because MMFA funds are meant to cover the cost of providing a free meal to students who would normally pay something to eat School Breakfast, MMFA schools must participate in the School Breakfast Program.

Related Research

Researchers continue to evaluate MMFA. Their findings will add to the growing body of evidence supporting the link between good nutrition and peak classroom performance.

- In 1981, Dr. Ernesto Pollitt determined in laboratory settings that students who did not eat breakfast could not complete simple tests as effectively as those who had. (Pollitt, E., Leibel, R.L., and Greenfield, D., *Brief Fasting, Stress, and Cognition in Children*. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, vol. 34, pp 1526-1533)
- In 1987, Meyers, Sampson, et. al. examined the effect of the School Breakfast Program on school performance of low-income elementary school children in Massachusetts. Students who participated in the School Breakfast Program had significantly higher standardized test scores in reading and math and were absent and tardy less often. (Meyers, A. F. et al., 1989. *School Breakfast and School Performance*. American Journal of Diseases of Children, 143:1234-1239)
- A study done in Israel found that children who eat breakfast closer to class and test-taking time perform better on standardized tests than those who ate breakfast at home. (Vaisman, N. et al., 1996. *Effects of Breakfast Timing on the Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students*, Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 150, 1089-1092)
- In 1998, Murphy and his colleagues reported on a study of 133 elementary students from Baltimore and Philadelphia whose schools had started universally free



school breakfast programs.

Students who increased their breakfast participation showed significantly improved math grades, decreased absences and tardiness, and decreased behavioral and psychological problems. (Murphy, et al, *The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning*. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 152 889-907)

- A study conducted in Baltimore City found that schools offering classroom breakfast experienced dramatic increases in school breakfast participation, increased school attendance, and decreased tardiness. (The Abell Report, *Data From Abell Foundation Project Concludes: Changes in Student Breakfast Program will Increase Participation, Improve Performance*, February/ March 1998, vol. 11, no. 1)
 - A three-year study of universal classroom breakfast in Minnesota resulted in an increase in participation from 12% to as high as 93%. Teachers reported increased student attention and fewer complaints about headaches and hunger. Administrators reported that school breakfast played a major role in the 40-50% decline in discipline issues. Researchers also noted a general increase in composite math and reading percentile scores. (Minnesota Universal Breakfast Pilot Study, Final Report, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1997)
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture is providing free breakfast to students in six school districts across the country as part of a federal study of the link between a nutritious breakfast and learning.



Raymond V. Bartlett, President, State Board of Education
Nancy S. Grasmick, Secretary-Treasurer of the Board, State Superintendent of Schools
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Sheila G. Terry, Chief, Nutrition and Transportation Services Branch
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The Maryland Meals for Achievement planning team includes representatives from the Abell Foundation, the Center for Poverty Solutions, Inc., the Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore City Public Schools, and school systems in Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Washington counties.

For more information about Maryland Meals for Achievement, contact the Maryland State Department of Education, Nutrition and Transportation Services Branch, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; kkerry@msde.state.md.us; or 410-767-0199, TTY/TDD 410-333-6442.

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CHILD NUTRITION FACT SHEET

Food Research & Action Center

1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 540

Washington, DC 20009

BREAKFAST FOR LEARNING

Recent scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance

“What we find particularly exciting is that this [school breakfast] is a relatively simple intervention that can significantly improve children's academic performance and psychological well-being.”

*J. Michael Murphy, EdD, School Breakfast Program researcher,
Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School*

Missing breakfast and experiencing hunger impair children's ability to learn

- Children who skip breakfast are less able to distinguish among similar images, show increased errors, and have slower memory recall.^{1,2}
- Children experiencing hunger have lower math scores and are more likely to have to repeat a grade.³
- Behavioral, emotional and academic problems are more prevalent among children with hunger.⁴
- Children experiencing hunger are more likely to be hyperactive, absent and tardy, in addition to having behavioral and attention problems more often than other children.⁵
- Children who are undernourished score lower on cognitive tests when they miss breakfast.^{6,7}
- Teens experiencing hunger are more likely to have been suspended from school, have difficulty getting along with other children, and have no friends.⁸
- Children with hunger are more likely to have repeated a grade, received special education services, or received mental health counseling, than low-income children who do not experience hunger.⁹

Eating breakfast at school helps children perform better

- Children who eat a complete breakfast, versus a partial one, make fewer mistakes and work faster in math and number checking tests.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹
- Providing breakfast to mildly undernourished students at school improves their speed and memory in cognitive tests.^{12,13}
- Children who eat breakfast show improved cognitive function, attention, and memory.¹⁴
- Participating in school breakfast is associated with improved math grades, attendance and punctuality.^{15,16}
- Children perform better on tests of vocabulary and matching figures after eating breakfast.^{17,18}
- Consuming breakfast improves children's performance on demanding mental tasks and reaction to frustration.¹⁹

School breakfast improves student behavior and learning environments

- Schools that provide breakfast in the classroom to all students show decreases in tardiness and suspensions as well as improved student behavior and attentiveness.^{20, 21}
- Providing students with breakfast in the classroom setting is associated with lower tardy rates and fewer disciplinary office referrals.²²
- School breakfast programs can lower absence and tardiness rates and improve standardized achievement test scores.²³

Universal school breakfast programs yield positive results

- Children who participate in universal school breakfast have lower rates of absence and tardiness.^{24, 25}
- Schools that provide universal school breakfast have higher breakfast participation, especially when breakfast is served in the classroom, and students who significantly increase their breakfast participation are more frequently on time and in attendance.²⁶
- Schools providing all students with free breakfast have greater positive changes in academic performance.²⁷

Breakfast can improve children's diets

- Children who eat breakfast tend to have more adequate nutrient intakes than children who do not.²⁸
- By eating breakfast, students also get more of important nutrients, vitamins and minerals such as calcium, dietary fiber, folate and protein.^{29,30}
- A higher percentage of children who skip breakfast do not meet two-thirds of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for vitamins A, E, D, and B₆.³¹

Breakfast may reduce obesity risk

- Adolescents who eat breakfast tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI); higher BMIs can indicate overweight and obesity.³²
- Girls who eat breakfast are more likely to have a lower BMI than girls who skip breakfast.³³
- Adolescents with one or two obese parents who eat breakfast every day are more likely to have BMIs within a healthy range than those who tend to skip breakfast.³⁴
- Low-income elementary school girls who participate in the School Breakfast, School Lunch, or Food Stamp Programs, or any combination of these programs, have significantly less risk of being overweight.³⁵

Beliefs about breakfast can influence participation

- Girls often skip breakfast because they believe it might make them fat and are concerned about gaining weight.^{36, 37}
- Adolescents who skip breakfast are significantly more likely to have fasted to lose weight.³⁸
- Children report that they believe eating breakfast increases their energy and ability to pay attention in school.³⁹

Breakfast for Learning

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Expanding the Reach of School Breakfast

WHY BREAKFAST COUNTS

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day – especially for learning. A key piece of school improvement is to ensure that each child starts the day right with a healthy breakfast at school.

Breakfast helps children learn. Numerous studies have shown that breakfast improves learning and attendance, and reduces behavior problems and tardiness. Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.

Breakfast promotes good health. Eating breakfast at school results in less visits to the school nurse, improves children's diets, and helps build healthy habits. And, children who start the day with breakfast are less likely to be obese.

Many schools are taking steps to make sure that all children start the day with breakfast. But, while participation has grown, too many children still are missing out. Together, we can take the next step to expand the reach of the school breakfast program in your school.

SCHOOLS CAN HELP BOOST PARTICIPATION BY TAKING TWO IMPORTANT STEPS



First Step – Provide universal breakfast – Providing universal ("free") breakfast means that all children can eat a healthy morning meal. Many school districts have taken this step, especially those with a high percentage of free and reduced-price eligible students.

There are a number of barriers that prevent children from getting to school in time for breakfast – tight morning schedules and late arrivals mean that many children just don't get to school in time for breakfast before class begins.



Second Step – Make breakfast part of the school day – Schools that bring breakfast to students – either by classroom breakfast, "grab-and-go" bags, or "second chance" breakfast – see that more children eat breakfast. That's great for children – and great for the schools. Children that eat breakfast are better behaved, have fewer sick days and visits to the school nurse, and they score higher on standardized tests.

I WANT TO INCREASE BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION AT MY SCHOOL. HOW DO I START?

Contact the Food Research and Action Center for help getting started. We'll help you decide what model will work best for your school and create a plan, complete with a budget analysis.

We'll help you to look at your current serving methods to overcome obstacles and identify opportunities. For example, it's helpful to think of ways that students can be involved. In some school districts, students who deliver the breakfast to the classroom receive community service credits.

Contact: Madeleine Levin | 202.986.2200 x3004 | mlevin@frac.org



Expanding the Reach of School Breakfast

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SERVE BREAKFAST

#1: Classroom Breakfast

Providing breakfast in the classroom is one easy way to boost breakfast participation. Students eat breakfast in their classroom either at the beginning of the school day or early during the day. Often breakfast is brought to classrooms from the cafeteria by students, or served from carts in the hallways by food service staff.

While teachers are initially concerned that classroom breakfast might cut down on class time, they find that students settle down faster when breakfast is served in the classroom. While the students eat breakfast during the first ten minutes of class, teachers use the time to take attendance and do usual administrative tasks.

Teachers see the difference that classroom breakfast makes – students pay more attention and are more focused on their work. Once they start serving breakfast in the classroom, teachers don't want to stop!

#2: Grab-and-Go Breakfast Bags

Grab-and-go bags are another option for schools to consider. All the components of school breakfast are conveniently packaged so students can grab a bag quickly, either from the cafeteria line or from carts on school grounds. Students can eat in the cafeteria, the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds.

Grab-and-go breakfast bags are especially convenient for middle and high schools with large numbers of students on the move. Plus, breakfast bags are seen as "cooler" than cafeteria breakfasts – and that means more students are likely to participate.

Some schools worried about the additional waste that might be produced by grab and go bags or classroom breakfast. But, custodial staff at the schools find that this is not the case. Special containers are available for students to throw out their trash. And, some schools use the breakfast program as a way to involve older students in helping with distribution and clean-up.

#3: "Second Chance" Breakfast

A lot of children – especially teens – don't like to eat breakfast early in the morning. Some schools offer a "second chance breakfast" some time after first period. Breakfasts are available in the cafeteria, from "grab and go" carts in the hallway, or in other high traffic areas. Having a second chance breakfast means that students get a healthy meal – and the energy they need to power through the rest of the morning.

What's for Breakfast?

Cold Breakfast Options

Breakfast bar
Cereal
Cheese
Fresh fruit
Fruit juice
Milk
Mini-bagels
Muffins
Yogurt

Hot Breakfast Options

Breakfast pizza
Pancakes
Egg & cheese burritos
Oatmeal
Sausage & egg sandwich
Waffles

All breakfast options must meet USDA requirements.



Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act

WHAT IS PROVISION 2?

- Provision 2 is an option in the federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program for schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs.
- Provision 2 schools do not have to collect and process school meals applications, keep track of meal categories, or conduct verifications for at least three out of every four years.
- Schools that opt for Provision 2 serve meals to all students at no charge. Provision 2 schools pay the difference between the cost of serving meals at no charge to all students and the federal reimbursement. The significant administrative savings of Provision 2 help offset the cost differential.

WHY PROVISION 2?

To simplify paperwork

- Applications – Collect applications only once every four years, at most.
- Claims – Record and track meal categories only once every four years, at most.
- Verifications – Conduct verifications only once every four years, at most.

To streamline meal service

- No more cashiers – All students eat at no charge.
- No more student PIN numbers, lunch tickets or ID cards – Collect only total meal counts.
- Faster serving lines – Students spend more time eating, less time in line.

To decrease school food service costs

- Significant administrative savings – Reduce labor costs associated with collecting, tracking and recording of applications, meal categories, payments and verifications.
- Free employees for other areas of food service – Employee hours spent on administration can be shifted to meal preparation and service.
- Economies of scale – Higher meal participation leads to lower per-meal costs.

To promote good nutrition and help improve student performance

- Provision 2 increases student participation in school meals.
- Children who eat school meals have more nutritious diets than children who don't, regardless of income level.
- Better nutrition in children leads to better academic performance, behavior and learning environments.
- Providing school meals at no charge promotes the value of good nutrition to all students.



Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act

HOW DOES PROVISION 2 WORK?

- Base Year – In the first year of Provision 2, schools collect applications and track meal categories (free, reduced price and “paid”). Schools also provide meals to all students at no charge.
- Administration for years 2 through 4 – For at least the three years following the Base Year, schools do not collect meal applications and count only meal totals. Schools continue to provide meals to all students at no charge.
- Reimbursement for years 2 through 4 – Schools calculate their federal meal reimbursements by applying the percentages of free, reduced price and “paid” meals served during the Base Year to the total number of meals served during each of the following years.
- Renewals – At the end of each four year cycle, a school may continue under Provision 2 for another four years without collecting new applications if the income level of the school’s population has not improved by more than five percent. The school’s reimbursements then would be based on the percentages of meal categories from the most recent Base Year.

IS PROVISION 2 RIGHT FOR ALL SCHOOLS?

- Schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price school meals are the most likely to succeed with Provision 2. School districts that are implementing Provision 2 have determined that they can operate Provision 2 without losing money in schools with as few as 60 to 75 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price school meals.
- Any school that participates in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program may opt for Provision 2. Even schools without high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price school meals may decide to opt for Provision 2 in order to improve the diets and academic performance of their students.

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH PROVISION 2

- Schools should first consider the changes in expenses and revenues that would occur under Provision 2. Contact FRAC for more information on Provision 2 cost-benefit analysis worksheets that have been developed in several states.
- School food authorities should contact their State Agencies for assistance on how to implement Provision 2 in some or all of their schools.
- USDA’s regulations concerning Provision 2 and other information about Provision 2 are posted on the USDA website at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/prov-1-2-3/provision1_2_3.htm

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Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Maryland Hunger Solutions, an anti-hunger and nutrition organization, is dedicated to ending hunger in Maryland by raising awareness of the problem among the public, media, and policymakers and changing policy and practice to connect struggling families to the Food Supplement Program and other federal nutrition programs.



For more information go to:

Baltimore City Public Schools

www.bcps.k12.md.us/school_info/lunch/breakfastclub.asp

Food Research and Action Center

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Maryland State Department of Education

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USDA

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