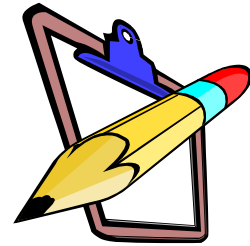


Initial Assessment

(Assessing Interest at School and Community Levels)



It is important to determine the level of interest of a school in starting or expanding the breakfast program. Participation is important – not only to meet a child’s nutritional needs, but also to receive the maximum reimbursement and to run a successful program. In child nutrition programs, serving lunch or breakfast has become more than serving food. Successful meal service requires customer satisfaction, a positive meal image and serving experience.

This section includes the tools to determine your school’s level of interest in starting or expanding the School Breakfast Program. The editable surveys found in this folder can be found in the folder called “Resources” in this kit or on the “Discover School Breakfast” CD. Some questions to ask about your school are:

DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?

The School Breakfast Program started as a two-year pilot program under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and was made permanent in October 1975. It is a Federally-assisted meal program operating in schools and institutions. 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.

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

WHO ARE YOUR STUDENTS?

This is important since the target audience and the age group will determine how you address their needs and the variety of tactics you will use. Does your school include grades K-6 or K-8 or K-12 or 6-9? Who composes the population you are serving? What are the demographics? All of these factors vary because all schools vary. Think about the students you are working with before implementing the program so that you address their needs appropriately. For example, a campaign with a cute mascot and colorful cartoon characters may not be successful in targeting a high school group. Similarly, you would not hand out wordy flyers for elementary students. Examine the audience and market to them appropriately.

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF INTEREST FROM THE COMMUNITY?

What does the community know about school breakfast? If you don't have a school breakfast program yet, what does the community think about school lunch? Does the community think parents should feed students breakfast? Do the majority of families have parents working outside the home? Do students have a long bus ride? What are children eating before school? Does your community take an active role in school activities? Is the School Board receptive to the School Breakfast Program?

WHO NEEDS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHY BREAKFAST IS IMPORTANT?

Everyone knows that breakfast is beneficial for students, but do other stakeholders know? Some decision makers may not be aware of all the benefits of breakfast. 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. The School Breakfast Program benefits not only the food service program at your school, but also increases the performance of students in school. Determine who needs more information and provide the necessary statistics or studies to educate them on why breakfast continues to be the most important meal of the day.

ASSESSING YOUR SCHOOL

In this section, you will find surveys for students, parents and school administrators. The surveys are designed for schools that do and do not have the School Breakfast Program. They are available on the CD in the "Resources" folder included in this kit and are editable to adapt to the needs of your school.

Distribute the survey to students and parents to learn more about their patterns of breakfast behavior. Are your students eating breakfast? What are their favorite foods? Are parents busier than ever before?

Results from the survey will be compiled into the administrator survey to provide an overview for creating necessary changes in food, timing or method of service. Work with your State Agency to determine the next step and work through the rest of this practical kit for ideas on how to address those needs.