



EXPANDING SCHOOL BREAKFAST TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND

- The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally-assisted meal program that operates in public and private nonprofit schools and residential child care institutions. Participating schools receive reimbursement for breakfasts which meet specific nutrition requirements.
- Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the School Breakfast Program regardless of household income.
- 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 FOR EXPANSION

- The majority of schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program also participate in breakfast. However, there is a significant disparity in participation rates at breakfast compared to participation rates at lunch, especially for low-income students.
- Nationwide, in School Year 2007-2008 only 47 percent of low-income students who participated in the School Lunch Program also participated in the School Breakfast Program.
- In [your district's name] district, X percent of students who participate in School Lunch also participate in School Breakfast. X number more students could benefit from breakfast in the morning. [If this information is not available at your district level, you can find state data by contacting your state Department of Education]
- Improving access to the SBP is an opportunity for schools to increase participation and ensure all students can start the day with the nutritional and academic benefits of breakfast.
- Exploring alternative methods for providing breakfast meal service that meets the needs of school staff and students can increase participation and revenue. For example, Breakfast in the Classroom has been shown to be very successful in elementary schools while Mid Morning Breakfast works well in middle and high schools.

- Student participation is the key to operating a successful and sustainable School Breakfast Program.

BENEFITS OF BREAKFAST

- **ACADEMIC BENEFITS**

- Eating breakfast can help improve math, reading, and standardized test scores.^{i ii iii}
- Children who eat breakfast are more likely to behave better in school and get along with their peers than those who do not.^{iv v}
- Breakfast helps children pay attention, perform problem-solving tasks, and improves memory.^{vi vii}
- Children who eat school breakfast are likely to have fewer absences and incidents of tardiness than those who do not.^{viii}
- Behavioral and emotional problems are less prevalent among children who consistently have access to regular meals.^{ix}
- Schools that provide breakfast in the classroom to all students have shown decreases in tardiness and suspensions as well as improved student behavior and attentiveness.^{x xi}
- Consumption of breakfast improves children's performance on demanding mental tasks and reaction to frustration.^{xii}

- **NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS**

- Children who eat breakfast tend to have more adequate nutrient intakes than children who do not.^{xiii}
- Adolescents who eat breakfast tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI). Higher BMIs can indicate overweight and obesity.^{xiv}
- By eating breakfast, students get more of important nutrients, vitamins and minerals such as calcium, dietary fiber, folate and protein.^{xv xvi}
- Low-income elementary school girls who participate in the School Breakfast, School Lunch, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formally known as the Food Stamp Program) have significantly less risk of being overweight.^{xvii}
- Students participating in the School Breakfast Program have shown what you eat for breakfast can have an impact on learning. One study showed that eating breakfast foods that are high in fiber and low in sugar for breakfast help students sustain the cognitive effects of breakfast.^{xviii}
- Studies have shown that children who eat breakfast on a regular basis are less likely to be overweight.^{xix xx xxi}
- Eating breakfast as a child is important for establishing healthy habits for later in life.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST EXPANSION

- **EXPLORE ALTERNATE SERVICE METHODS**
 - Grab ‘n Go Breakfasts are pre-packaged with all components of the meal. These breakfasts can be available at sites around the school for pick up on the go, during break, or before or after first period.
 - Breakfast in the classroom is breakfast delivered to and consumed in the classroom, typically before school starts.
 - Breakfast after first period is served after the first period between classes and finished during the first period or during students’ break.

- **UTILIZE PROVISIONS 2 AND 3**
 - FNS makes available three alternate methods of determining student eligibility for reimbursement and daily meal counts in the school meals programs. Provision 2 and 3 enable schools to provide meals at no charge to all students which reduces administrative costs and burdens.
 - Provision 2 and 3 are most effective in schools with a high percentage of free and reduced-price eligible students.
 - Schools that provide breakfast at no charge to students – especially when coupled with alternative service methods – have higher breakfast participation. Students with frequent breakfast participation have lower rates of tardiness and absenteeism.^{xxii}
 - Schools utilizing Provision 2 and 3 eliminate fees which may be a barrier to participation for many low-income children. In addition, this may reduce the stigma associated with school meal participation.

- **DIRECT CERTIFICATION**
 - Students who are recipients of TANF and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are automatically eligible for free school meals. By obtaining information from your state or local social service agency, you can identify children who are eligible for free meals.

- **MAKE BREAKFAST EXPANSION AND OUTREACH PART OF YOUR WELLNESS POLICY**
 - To facilitate breakfast expansion, schools can take advantage of existing networks to promote school breakfast.

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