



FACT SHEET: SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

BOTTOM LINE

Share Our Strength® knows that childhood hunger is a solvable problem. The No Kid Hungry® Campaign is working to end childhood hunger by surrounding kids with nutritious meals where they live, learn and play. Federal nutrition programs such as the School Breakfast Program protect our kids from hunger. These programs also have long-lasting effects on academic achievement and health. Connecting kids to the School Breakfast Program is a core element of the No Kid Hungry state strategy.

KEY POINTS

- **Every child should start the school day with a healthy breakfast.** Studies show that students who skip breakfast generally have slower memory recall, make more errors and are more likely to be absent or tardy and to repeat a grade. Students who eat breakfast generally have better vitamin and nutrient intake, enjoy overall healthier diets and are less prone to being overweight or obese.
- **Limited food budgets, challenges with early work schedules and transportation, or children who won't eat early in the morning** make it difficult for many families to provide a healthy breakfast every morning. Too often children arrive at school without the fuel they need to be active participants in the classroom.
- The School Breakfast Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, plays a crucial role in **making sure kids get the food they need to focus and excel in the classroom.**
- Barriers, including stigma and transportation logistics, cause school breakfast participation rates to be low. **Of the nearly 20 million low-income students in the U.S. who ate free or reduced-price lunch in 2011, only about 9.8 million participated in the School Breakfast Program.**
- **There are creative, low-cost ways to increase school breakfast participation.** No Kid Hungry Campaign partners are working with teachers, principals, school food service directors, parents and students to implement new way to serve breakfast such as offering Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab n' Go options that make breakfast a part of every students morning schedule.
- **New school breakfast service models are cost-effective, easy to implement and proven to increase program participation.**

Need

- **Teachers:** A recent Share Our Strength survey showed that nearly two-thirds (65%) of K-8 teachers say there are children in their classrooms who regularly come to school hungry. [[Share Our Strength](#)]
- **Need:** Of the over 20 million low-income students in the U.S. who ate free or reduced-price lunch in 2011, only about 9.8 million participated in the School Breakfast Program. [[FRAC](#)]
- **Eligibility:** For schools that participate in the School Breakfast Program, children in a family of four earning up to \$41,348 qualify for reduced-price breakfast and those in families earning up to \$29,055 are eligible for free meals. Children in families of four earning more than \$41,348 can purchase breakfast at full price. [[FRAC](#)]
- **Effect of Underutilization:** During the 2010-2011 school year, states could have brought in an additional \$582 million in federal child nutrition funding to help pay for school breakfast programs, which would have served an additional 2.4 million children. [[FRAC](#)]

Health

- **Skipping Breakfast has a Negative Effect on Health:** When students miss a healthy morning meal they go to class hungry. Hunger is associated with lower physical activity, stomachaches, headaches, depression, anxiety and a decreased ability to focus. [[FRAC](#)] and [[NIH](#)]
- **Better Diets:** Students who participate in the School Breakfast Program are more likely to consume important vitamins and mineral. Eating breakfast regularly is linked to greater intake of fiber, calcium, iron and vitamin C and lower in intake of fat, cholesterol and sodium. [[NIH](#)]
- **Decrease Risk of Childhood Obesity:** School Breakfast participation is associated with lower body mass index (BMI), lower probability of overweight and lower probably of obesity. [[Journal of Human Resources](#)]
- **The School Breakfast Programs Ends Hunger:** Students who participate in the School Breakfast Program report decreases in symptoms of hunger and the program decreases the food insecurity risk of children. [[Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism](#)]

Academic Achievement

- **Skipping Breakfast has a Negative Impact on Learning:** Studies show that students who skip breakfast generally have slower memory recall, make more errors and are more likely to be absent or tardy and to repeat a grade. [[FRAC](#)]
- **Improved School Achievements:** Students who eat breakfast consistently show improvement in verbal fluency, arithmetic, tests of attention, memory, creativity, physical endurance, and general tests of academic achievement and cognitive functioning. [[NIH](#)]
- **Improved Memory, Listening Skills:** A Tufts University study showed elementary school students who eat breakfast listen better and have better spatial memory and short-term memory than students who skip breakfast. [[Physiology & Behavior](#)]
- **Better Behaved:** Researchers found low-income students who ate meals at school were less likely to be hyperactive and had fewer behavioral or attention problems than their hungry peers. [[NIH](#)]
- **Higher Rates Of Attendance:** Studies show that universal school breakfast program participation is associated with higher rates of attendance and declines in tardiness. [[USDA](#)] and [[FRAC](#)]
- **Lower Rates Of Tardiness:** Schools with increased participation in school breakfast programs had their proportion of children chronically tardy decreased by 67%. [[ERIC](#)]

One of the most effective ways to significantly boost school breakfast participation is to make it part of the school day. Traditional school breakfast programs often operate too early for students to participate, particularly if bus or carpool schedules do not allow them to get there on time. Innovative models of serving school breakfast that have proven to be successful in expanding access to school breakfast include:

Breakfast in the Classroom

Breakfast in the Classroom is a service delivery model where students eat breakfast in their classroom after the official start of the school day. Students or staff may deliver breakfasts to classrooms from the cafeteria via coolers or insulated rolling bags, or school nutrition staff can serve breakfast from mobile carts in the hallways. Breakfast in the Classroom typically takes 10–15 minutes and can happen during morning tasks such as attendance or it can be integrated with other instructional activities. Some schools encourage teachers to participate in the program and eat with their students.

Grab N' Go

Grab N' Go is a service delivery model where students pick up conveniently packaged breakfasts from mobile service carts in high traffic areas, such as hallways, entryways or cafeterias, when they arrive at school or between classes. Students can eat in the cafeteria, the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds. The Grab n' Go model is often used in middle and high schools because it is so flexible and can accommodate varying schedules and students who are on the move.

Second Chance Breakfast

Second Chance Breakfast refers to a meal service model where students eat breakfast during a break in the morning, often after first period or midway between breakfast and lunch. Schools can serve breakfast in the same manner as they would with traditional Grab N' Go breakfast. This model can be particularly effective for older students who may not be hungry first thing in the morning or may opt to hang out with friends. Second Chance Breakfast may be referred to by a variety of names, such as Breakfast After First Period, School Brunch or Mid-Morning Nutrition Break.

Breakfast Vending

Breakfast Vending allows students to access breakfast foods through vending machines. This model is most often implemented in high schools and vending machines are usually only available prior to the start of the school day.

For more information: USDA School Breakfast Expansion Strategies at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/expansionstrategies.htm>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Share Our Strength Center for Best Practices School Breakfast Page:

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast>

Research

- Share Our Strength’s “Help Close the School Breakfast Gap” Toolkit: http://www.strength.org/school_breakfast/school_breakfast_toolkit/
- “Hunger in Our Schools: Share Our Strength’s Teacher’s Report.” Share Our Strength, 2011: <http://strength.org/teachers/final-report-brochure.pdf>
- “Breakfast for Health.” Food Research and Action Center, 2011. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/breakfastforhealth.pdf>
- “Breakfast for Learning.” Food Research and Action Center, Fall 2011. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>
- “School Breakfast Scorecard: School Year 2010 – 2011” Food Research and Action Center, 2011: http://frac.org/pdf/school_breakfast_scorecard_2010-2011.pdf
- USDA School Breakfast Program: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/>

Videos

- “Help American Federation of Teachers and Share Our Strength End Hunger”:
<http://youtu.be/R4iGLKfLubc>
- Hunger in the Classroom videos (6 videos):
<http://www.youtube.com/user/ShareStrength#grid/user/26AF0362840E9AAD>