

POINTERS FOR CLASSROOM BREAKFASTS

Indeed, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Research shows a clear link between eating breakfast and improved school performance. Yet, the Michigan Department of Education reports that although over 80% of Michigan schools offer breakfast, participation is very low. To help boost school breakfast participation, State Superintendent Mike Flanagan has issued the Michigan School Breakfast Challenge. He challenges superintendents to increase school breakfast participation in their districts by 50% by May 2010. Now, schools can provide breakfast to students in the classroom during the first class period and count this as instructional time if pupils and teachers are present and engaged in instruction. To learn more about the challenge, go to www.michigan.gov/mde.

Breakfast in the Classroom

Bringing breakfast to the students may be the easiest way to increase participation. When you bring the food to the kids, nearly every child eats. It just makes sense! School breakfasts not only have to taste good but they also have to be served at a time and place that is convenient and accessible to all. Many students have long bus commutes and do not have time to eat before school starts. Other students go to schools with cafeterias that are too small to serve large numbers at one time. Serving it in the classroom can be simple and easy.

How Does Breakfast in the Classroom Work?

- USDA reimbursable breakfast is delivered directly to the classroom
- Students eat at their desks, usually in 10-15 minutes
- Teachers use the time to take attendance, make announcements, collect homework, read aloud or begin the morning lesson
- Cold cereals, granola bars, yogurt, milk, fruit, juice, bagels and breakfast sandwiches are common menu offerings

What Are the Benefits?

Children who eat breakfast at school are less likely to be absent, tardy or sitting in the nurse's office. In addition, research shows that children who skip breakfast rarely make up for missed nutrients later in the day. They perform better in school and have fewer reported discipline problems. When kids eat breakfast, everyone benefits. Many teachers report that the time spent on Classroom Breakfast is more than made up during the day, since time is not lost managing hungry children. To help you get the support of all stakeholders – principals, teachers, custodians and parents- check out the tools available in the USDA Discover School Breakfast Toolkit at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/toolkit/>. Sample letters, menus and promotional ideas are available for your use.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

How do I get started?

All educators understand the importance of breakfast to learning.

That's not what you have to convince them of...it's the practical implementation.

- Invite teachers to be Breakfast "Power Partners" as a pilot for a trial time period.
- (As a Power Partner, offer an incentive, maybe a free lunch coupon or classroom treat)
- Assure the teacher that the Nutrition Staff will handle all the logistics.
- Get class list; take orders day before
- Make breakfast sacks day before.... each day will have a unique menu
- Have breakfast sacks on a cart and ready to roll down to the classroom.

We've provided a sample teacher letter and a sample parent hand out to help you get started. It's pretty simple and once you have a few classrooms doing it, the other teachers quickly recognize the benefits to the educational process. You'll be surprised how fast the rest of the staff jump on board to implement "Breakfast in the Classroom"!

What Can I Do?

It can be a challenge to get students to the cafeteria with time to eat before school starts. Consider taking the State Superintendent's Breakfast Challenge by making breakfast part of the school day.

- Explore other alternative methods of service such as: Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab n' Go Breakfast or Breakfast After 1st Period. There is more than one way to serve breakfast in school. For a sampling of alternate breakfast venues, click on <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/toolkit/theres.pdf> .
- Talk to other districts that have successful programs (see "Thumbs Up! Testimonials section).
- Gain commitment from administrators, food service staff, teachers, custodians and parents.
- Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles.

As a school nutrition professional, your role is key. Since no meal is as important as a healthy breakfast, consider making the School Breakfast Program a top priority. Under your leadership, your school can successfully improve access, participation and nutritional quality of this important meal.

Additional Resources

www.schoolnutrition.org

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast

www.michigan.gov/mde

www.udim.org

www.schoolbreakfast.org

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/samplebreakfastmenu.pdf

<http://www.frac.org/pdf/urbanbreakfast07.pdf>



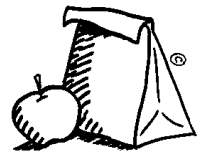
Sample parent letter

Hi everyone,

All of us understand the importance of breakfast in relation to behavior and learning. Your student is invited to be a Breakfast Power Partner! As a Power Partner, he/she can order breakfast to be delivered right to the classroom. Breakfast would only be delivered on the days that it was ordered. By agreeing to participate in this program you are not obligated to purchase a breakfast meal. Your agreement simply allows your youngster to purchase breakfast if he/she wants one. The charge for breakfast is only 1.25 and includes milk, juice and an entrée. The cost of the meal will automatically be taken out of your child's Nutrition Meal account.

Be assured that the Nutrition Staff will handle all the logistics. Breakfast orders will be taken the day before from students who want a breakfast for the next day. Breakfast sacks would be delivered to the classroom first thing the following morning.

Together we can "power up" your student's day! Interested? If so, please sign below and check off the days you'd permit your child to purchase. As a "smart start" kick-off, free breakfast will be provided to your child's classroom Monday and Tuesday, February 2nd & 3rd.



BREAKFAST PERMISSION

**Yes, my child, _____, has my permission to order breakfast.
I have checked the following days when he/she may choose to order:
(Complimentary breakfasts will be provided for all students on Feb. 2nd & 3rd)**

**I understand there is a charge of \$1.25 that will automatically be debited from my child's meal account for each breakfast ordered. If my child currently qualifies for Free/Reduced lunch benefits, they also qualify for breakfast benefits
By granting this permission, I understand there is no obligation to order breakfast.**

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Sample Teacher letter

Hi everyone,

You're invited to be a Breakfast Power Partner as a pilot for a trial time period. As a Power Partner, the Food & Nutrition Department is offering a pizza party for your entire classroom as an incentive for participating.

All educators understand the importance of breakfast in relation to behavior and learning. That's not where the problem lies; it's the practical implementation. In-School breakfast is counted as instructional time; it would be offered on a cost basis to the students whose parents order the service. Be assured that the Nutrition Staff will handle all the logistics of communicating with the parents and providing breakfast to your classroom participants. F&N would take breakfast orders the day before from your class list and breakfast sacks would be labeled with the students' names & delivered to the classroom at the designated breakfast time.

Some Menu Examples:

Monday: Baked Breakfast pastry, cheese stick, milk & juice

Tuesday: Jumbo Cereal pouch, milk & juice

Wednesday: Bagel, cheese stick, milk & juice

Thursday: Mini muffin/quick bread, sunflower seeds, milk & juice

Friday: Yogurt w/ cereal crunch topper, milk & juice

What do you think? Interested?

If so, please contact me and together we can "power up" your pupils.

Thanks for your time,