

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

Contents:

Why breakfast...and why free?

Does the program fit my school's need?

Who are the key people to consider when discussing implementation?

Can our school afford to give food away?

How exactly does the program work?

Key Steps

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

Why breakfast...and why free?

Without breakfast, it is difficult for students to concentrate and learn. Eating breakfast helps children to pay attention, to perform problem-solving tasks and improves memory. According to the USDA and a number of studies cited in “Benefits of Breakfast,” eating breakfast can improve math skills, reading skills and standardized test scores. Studies have also found that children who eat breakfast are likely to have fewer absences and incidents of tardiness. Schools that provide Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) to all students have shown decreases in visits to the nurse and a decrease in suspensions, as well as improved overall student behavior and attentiveness. Providing breakfast free for all students increases participation of individuals who need the meals by eliminating social and economic barriers.

Does the program fit my school’s need?

All public and non-profit private schools (regardless of tuition) and all residential child care institutions (RCCIs) can participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

All students in these schools may participate in the programs, but must meet certain criteria to qualify for free meals or reduced priced meals (the maximum price to the student’s family is 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch), or “paid” meals, for which students pay most of the cost (the federal government pays a modest amount for administrative costs).

Schools that have high concentrations of free- and reduced-priced-eligible students can offer breakfast in the classroom free to all students, regardless of free or reduced-priced meal status. When does breakfast in the classroom work best?

- Schools where students stay in the same classroom all day
- Schools with large numbers of bussed students who do not have time for breakfast in the cafeteria.
- Schools with small cafeterias that cannot feed all students breakfast at the same time.

Where does it make sense to provide a universal free program?

- In schools with greater than 60% of students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals.
- Schools with higher percentages (75 percent or more) of low-income students, Provision 2 is an option. Provision 2 enables schools and institutions to provide free meals to all of their students while reducing paperwork and administrative costs. While any school that participates in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program may opt for Provision 2, generally schools with high percentages of low-income students are able to utilize this option. Under Provision 2, all students receive free meals, regardless of income, and schools collect applications for free and reduced-priced meals once every four years, at

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

most. Also, schools under Provision 2, do not have to track and record the different categories of meals served for at least three out of every four years. Provision 2 schools pay the difference between the cost of serving meals at no charge to all students and the federal reimbursement for the meals.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/>

<http://frac.org/>

<http://www.slideserve.com/kordell/universal-breakfast>

General Mills, 2008, Breakfast PowerPoint “The Benefits of Breakfast”

Who are the key people to consider when discussing implementation?

- **Administration – Superintendents, Principals**
 - Role – support and buy-in from this level of leadership is imperative to ensure success. This level of support will ensure that challenges from other levels are met with a solution-oriented culture.
 - Key focus points/things to consider – bus schedules, schedule of day, cleanliness, class time fluidity, removing burden from teachers and staff, myth it is “too expensive”.
 - Pros – better test scores, longer attention span, calm classroom, children are eating a healthy meal, attendance improves, fewer students arrive late, fewer reported discipline problems, BIC usually only takes 10-15 minutes (and counts as class time).
 - Changes – early morning arrival and release of students from the bus to accommodate hallway congestion, teachers tracking attendance & meals, clean up.
- **Teachers**
 - Role – support and buy-in from this level of leadership can be your marketing tool for expanding this initiative across districts, townships and counties.
 - Key focus points/things to consider – food in the classroom, types of food in classroom, arrival time, schedule of day, cleanliness, “beginning of day” agenda, tracking of attendance and meals eaten.
 - Pros – test scores, attention span, students are eating a healthy meal, sharing a meal together as a class, calm classroom, better attendance, students arrive on time, fewer reported discipline issues, BIC usually only takes 10-15 minutes.
 - Changes – arrival, tracking and release of students from the bus to accommodate hallway congestion; clean up, agenda to start the day.
- **Food Service Department**

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

- Role – Need support and buy-in from Director Level. They will usually market, implement, and initiate any logistical changes that are needed to ensure success.
- Key focus points/things to consider – Enough staff in the a.m. to prepare and implement. Afternoon staff to prep for the next day. Enough staff hours to support all logistics, etc. Staff to enter administrative data. Equipment needs – coolers, carts, etc.
- Pros – Ease when serving in classroom. Minimal Cafeteria clean-up. Revenue. Students that are better prepared to learn.
- Changes – Staffing/training needed to address resources and needs to implement.
- **Staff within Food Service Department**
 - Role – to provide support and implementation of BIC to students across the entire student population.
 - Key focus points – # of meals that will need to be prepared for a universal BIC, training, logistics, earlier hours
 - Changes – Staff schedule, staff prep (p.m. day before and a.m. day of), different equipment, possibly different products and menus
- **Custodial Department**
 - Role – buy-in, support and cooperation from custodians. Involve custodial staff to ensure that the best plan for your staff, students and building are implemented. Custodial staff in a.m. must ensure adequate clean-up to satisfy administration and teacher staff.
 - Key focus points/things to consider – More trash cans (possibly one for food and one for liquids)
 - Pros – Allows for time for other projects as the students can help with part of the cleanup effort.
 - Changes – resources and schedules
- **Students**
 - Role – to participate
 - Key focus points/things to consider – picky eaters, “I already ate,” embarrassment if spillage, stigma of Free & Reduced...but this is not an issue for Universal Breakfast in the classroom programs. Also, allergies and special diets need to be considered.
 - Pros – a healthy, nourished student who is well equipped and ready to learn, better test scores, eliminates the stigma of Free & Reduced when all students eat at no charge.
 - Changes – bus schedule, arrival time and release from the bus at the beginning of the day agenda
- **Parents**
 - Role – to understand the program and embrace it. Help create a culture that it is ok to eat breakfast at school.
 - Key focus points/things to consider – stigma of Free & Reduced.

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

- Pros – helps with morning routines at home, ensures kids have the opportunity to have a healthy breakfast, better test scores, longer attention spans, happier kids.
- Changes – morning routine, bus schedules, arrival times, accepting a new culture surrounding students eating breakfast at school at no charge.

Map of Approach –

- Food Service Director – gain support first and foremost.
- Food Service Director – to approach Administration – gain support
 - Utilize meetings, walk thru visits of successful implementation sites, videos etc.
- Administration & Food Service Director – to approach Teachers – Teachers Meeting etc. to gain support. Utilize videos, Breakfast = Success Resource etc.
- Food Service Director – gains support from staff. Utilize meetings, walk thru visits of successful implementation sites, videos, etc.
- Food Service Director – gains support from Custodial Staff.
- Administration – allows marketing to parents and students to create a culture of successful Universal BIC/or Universal “No Charge” Breakfast participation.
- Teachers market and direct students as program is implemented.

Can our school afford to give food away?

Part I – Day-to-Day Operations

Key elements:

There are several key aspects to running a successful breakfast program, and the first is to be able to run the effort with a balanced budget. As shown by the Maryland case study, programs that are not able to break even will ultimately fail if not funded through some alternative process.

The approximate cost of a breakfast meal (on average) is about \$1.15 (this includes the meal cost and personnel costs).

Reimbursement for breakfast from governmental programs is currently (2012 projected):

\$1.48 for every child taking a meal who meets the requirements for a free meal

\$1.18 for every child taking a meal who meets the requirements for a reduced-cost meal.

Also, for severe-needs schools*, there is an additional \$0.28 provided for each free or reduced- priced meal.

Paid meals cost students approximately \$ 0.26.

Together, these subsidies can make it possible to run a “universal breakfast program.” The focus on a “universal” program is based on data showing breakfast program uptake and is discussed in a separate section of this guide. Although situations dictate a school-by-school assessment, for schools where the free and reduced children make up 60% or more of the total population of the school taking free or reduced cost

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

meals (lunch), this approach is viable. It may be the case that a universal breakfast program in a severe needs school is not financially viable and this should be investigated before initiating a universal feeding program.

See associated calculator to learn where your school ranks on the reimbursement-to-cost ratio.

Breakfast pay back:

Day to day calculations:

Calculator: (a copy of the excel sheet calculator can be found on the site)

Example:

Number of Paid meals	39
Number of Reduced meals	8
Number of Free meals	53

			Severe Need	Here the extra \$0.28 is added		
Reg						
Free	Reduced	Paid	Free	Reduced	Paid	Cost/meal
1.48	1.18	0.26	1.76	1.46	0.26	1.15

	Cost to School	Reimbursement	Balance
\$	115	98.02	-16.98

	Severe Need	Cost to School	Reimbursement	Balance
\$		115	115.1	0.1

***Severe needs criteria** - Schools where at least 40 percent of the lunches served were free or reduced-priced meals. This is based upon the October data from the previous two academic years.

See, “The **School Breakfast Program** provides federally subsidized breakfasts to children...”

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

Part II – “Capital” start up expenses

The expenses associated with starting up a universal breakfast in the classroom program are determined by the school layout and other school dependent factors. These costs can be substantial and schools are often not budgeted for new programs like this. A standard cost for set up may include:

Trays and pans (\$30 per) (average need is about 28):	\$850
Carts (\$480 per) (average need is about 3):	\$1500
Freezer locks and other associate items (\$25 per) (average need is about 2):	\$100
Cooler/Hot bags (\$75 per) (average need is about ~28):	\$2100
Total (based upon average need):	\$4550

An additional cost associated with the purchase of freezers needs to be accounted for where necessary.

Equipment should be selected to fit the specific needs for each school.

Scenario #1:

This example is for a program needing all the materials and for a larger population of kids. This is a high-end example. Resource needs could increase if additional refrigerator capacity is necessary.

Cost Calculator	School #1 Material needs	Cost of one Unit	Total Number of Units requested plus 1	Total Cost of each line item
	Bags	\$74	28	\$2,072
	Trays/pans	\$30	28	\$840
	Carts	\$480.00	3	\$1,440
	Freezer locks	\$25	2	\$50.00
	Total Cost			\$4,402.00
	Total number of students	759	One cart for every 10 classrooms rounded up	
	Number of Classrooms	27		

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

Scenario #2:

This situation is for a smaller school requiring fewer materials based on the layout and process set up for the building. This is a low-end projection, but resource needs could increase if additional refrigerator capacity is necessary.

Cost Calculator	School #2 Material needs	Cost of one Unit	Total Number of Units requested plus 1	Total Cost of each line item
	Bags	\$74	22	\$1,628
	Trays/pans	\$30	0	0
	Carts	\$480.00	2	\$960
	Freezer locks	\$25	0	0
	Total Cost			\$2,588.00
	Total number of students	489	One cart for every 10 classrooms rounded up	
	Number of Classrooms	19		

Additional capital costs should be considered (including the cost of extra refrigerator capacity as necessary). There are grants and other funding sources for this start-up financial aid, including:

- Lilly / Elanco
- General Mills
- Kellogg’s “Share Your Breakfast” program
- The Dairy Council programs ([Fuel Up to Play 60](#))
- Local Dairy Milk Coolers

We suggest you design a program that will work for you and try to keep the costs to a minimum (especially at kick-off). Feel free to contact Robin Miner ([contact info](#)) at Gleaners for more information on start-up funding.

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

How exactly does the program work?

How does the program work?

Teacher's Viewpoint:

- Breakfast is delivered to your classroom before students arrive for the day.
- As students enter the classroom in the morning, they pick up their breakfast and go back to their desks to eat
- As the teacher takes attendance, he/she also marks the breakfast roster - indicating if the child takes a breakfast. (If students are old enough they may mark the roster themselves when they pick up their breakfast.)
- When students are finished with breakfast, they discard their trash in designated trash cans
- Teacher places leftover breakfasts, pans, breakfast roster in hallway to be picked up by cafeteria staff.

Food Service Staff Viewpoint: Coordinating this program may seem daunting but once you get organized and come up with a plan it is easy to run.

- **Step 1: Asses your equipment, facility, and labor**
 - With increased breakfast numbers you will need to make sure that your coolers can handle more milk and juice.
 - You will need large carts to transport the breakfast to the classroom-large metal racks with large wheels work well—these are most effective with 2 people pushing them.
 - You will also need pans or trays to put the breakfast item in.
 - You will need more labor in the morning to help deliver all of the food to the classrooms-this will depend on the size of your building but typically bringing in a couple current employees a little early will do the trick. (Some schools have had student helpers assist in delivery and organization of the morning breakfast.)
- **Step 2: Plan your menu**

Individually wrapped items are the easiest for transport to the classroom. There are several items (ex. Mini Pancakes, Cinni Minnis, Sausage Biscuit and Maple Waffle) on the market that are perfect for breakfast in the classroom.

 - Try to stay away from sticky and messy items.
 - A two- or three-week cycle menu works well to include some variety. (see sample menu on the site)
- **Step 3: Make a Plan for Execution**

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

- You will need classroom rosters to send to each classroom-you should be able to print these from your POS system.
- Forecast your numbers-it's easiest to start out sending the same amount of food to every classroom. Choose a high number so that you don't run out. You will be able to forecast more accurately after determining student preference.
- Label pans and milk crates with classroom number and organize them by hallway
- Assign employees to deliver to specific areas of the building.
- Determine who is doing what. Who is counting out the milk and juice? Who is counting and dividing the main entrée? Work schedules? Etc.
- **Step 4: Execute the Plan-Morning of Delivery**
 - Place portions of the prepared entrée into pre-marked pans and pair them with the matching milk crate. Place milk crate with milk and juice or fruit onto cart and place pan of food on top of crate
 - Load all carts with breakfast and breakfast rosters.
 - 15-20 minutes before students arrive in the building send the carts out to deliver breakfast to each classroom.
 - If possible leave cart out of the way in hallway for ease when picking up leftovers.
 - Work with your building administrators and teachers to set a time for pick up. Have teachers place all leftovers and rosters in the hallways so you don't have to disturb the class.
 - Pick up all leftovers and transport back to kitchen.
 - Have manager (or whoever is entering the breakfasts) collect the rosters and begin entering them into POS system.
 - Have designated kitchen employees count leftovers and dispose of or save them according to your policy.
- **Example Timeline:**
 - 8:30 – Delivery of breakfast started, first class delivered.
 - 8:35 – All breakfast crates delivered, cart left outside classrooms
 - 8:45 – Bell rings for kids to come to class
 - 8:55 – Bell rings for kids to be in class – students sitting at desks eating (rather quietly too) working on handouts that were picked up after they entered class.
 - 9:03 – Announcements and Pledge of Allegiance, kids still eating
 - 9:15 – Food service staff pick up food leftover outside of the classrooms
 - 9:25 – Custodial staff collects trash receptacles

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

Key Steps

When considering Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom there are several items that should be considered and planned for.

- First of all, convincing the principal or administration that their students would benefit from the program will be the first and most important step. There is ample information to document the benefits to move the effort forward. Most principals understand the benefits of a good breakfast, but may not understand why the school should be providing it. They also may not see how providing breakfast for free to all would impact the daily operation of the morning. Change can be difficult, but it is worth the small amount of effort upfront to show them how a small change can have a great benefit.
- The second potential challenge is showing teachers how it can benefit them. As with the principal, teachers may not understand how the process will impact their classroom. They will be asked to assume some responsibility and accountability for the meals distributed. When teachers see that the mornings are more relaxed and they actually have more time to get their morning activities accomplished they are often surprised and become supportive of the program. The process makes for a simple series of routine steps in the morning. Also, the benefits of improved academic performance and reduced behavioral problems is presented, they will be able to see how this will benefit their classroom experience as well.
- Custodians should see this type of effort as a simple replacement for cafeteria based breakfast programs. The first impression is that it will create more work for them due to the distribution and collection of trash. The custodians we have worked with were surprised to see that it actually took less time than emptying trash in the cafeteria and that they were able to do other things during the breakfast meal period before collecting the trash cans. If the evening custodians place the trash cans in the hallways the night before, the morning crew will have little to do till after the meal period. They were also surprised at how few spills occurred in the classroom. Students are not rushed; they are sitting at their individual desks so they are not as apt to spill.
- Food service employees see the benefits early and usually quickly convert to the new process with little need for help to accomplish the change beyond the first few days. Training and the ability to actually observe the process in action at another building, as well as talking to peers from other townships, can be a tremendous help in bringing the food service employees on board.
- Additional points to consider are space and electrical needs for refrigeration. Additional refrigeration space may be needed to accommodate the increase in meals. Milk and

Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom – A Guide to Success –

juice storage in particular was an issue for some schools. It may require additional outlets to plug in new milk coolers, as well as finding a place to put them. Special locked plugs can be installed to make sure coolers were not accidentally unplugged. Space may also be needed to store the containers or insulated bags that are used to hold the meals to be transported, as well as the carts used to transport the meals to the classrooms. Space should also be considered for preparation and counting out the meals for each room.

- Finally, one last potential challenge to consider is indifference to the need for breakfast program. We are confident that by showing other programs and the resulting improved test scores, better attendance and/or fewer trips to the nurses' station at similar schools, that this challenge can easily be overcome. When a principal sees another school with a successful program they will be more interested in participating. The ultimate key to a successful program is to engage the staff and focus on the positive aspects of the program. The benefits to the children, improved behavior and test scores and ultimately a happier school, will be the result.