



BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL STRATEGIES FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Middle and high schools typically have lower breakfast participation than elementary schools.ⁱ Middle and high school students have unique needs; therefore, the breakfast program should be adapted accordingly in order to gain buy-in from students and increase breakfast participation. This resource provides strategies on how to modify your school breakfast program to engage middle and high school students and get more students eating breakfast.

CHOOSE A BREAKFAST MODEL THAT WORKS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

There are common barriers that may prevent students from accessing school breakfast when it is served in the cafeteria before class begins, such as:

- Students arriving late to school due to bus or carpool schedules,
- Students may not be hungry first thing in the morning,
- Cafeteria location may not be convenient for students,
- There is a stigma associated with school breakfast being only for low-income students, and
- Students may prefer to socialize rather than eat alone in the cafeteria.

Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) models offer breakfast as part of the school day, just like lunch, and moves breakfast from the cafeteria to where students are, like classrooms and common areas. BAB models are one of the most effective ways to boost breakfast participation. Find out more about the three most common models below.

Grab and Go is a win! The Grab and Go breakfast model allows students pick up breakfasts from mobile carts in high traffic areas, such as hallways, entryways, or quick cafeteria lines on their way to class. This model is a speedy, easy way for students to pick up breakfast when they arrive at school, which is why it's so popular among middle and high school students. Students can eat in their classroom or in a common area.

Deliver Breakfast to the Classroom. Schools that Implement Breakfast in the Classroom, where breakfast is delivered to the classroom and eaten in the classroom after the official start of the school day, is another way to meet students where they are.



ⁱ Based on Share Our Strength analysis of over 2,000 schools.

Some schools bring breakfast components to each classroom every morning using insulated roller bags, while other schools stop by each classroom with a breakfast cart so students can quickly choose their breakfast items with minimal classroom disruption.

Offer Second Chance Breakfast. The Second Chance breakfast model shifts breakfast to later in the morning, often between first and second periods, or midway between breakfast and lunch. This model enables students who are not hungry first thing in the morning a chance to eat breakfast. Schools can serve breakfast in the same manner as they would with Grab and Go, or can they re-open the cafeteria to serve breakfast and allow students time to eat.

El Monte Union High School District in El Monte, CA implemented Second Chance breakfast between 1st and 2nd periods, called Nutrition Breaks, using carts, vending machines, and quick cafeteria lines. They saw a 33 percent increase in breakfast participation as a result.

ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THE SUCCESS OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST

Engagement of middle and high school students is key to high school breakfast. Treat students like customers of the breakfast program, knowing that they have different needs and tastes than elementary school students. Bring students into the conversation to gain buy-in and empower them to help shape the breakfast program based around their needs.

Solicit student feedback. Students should be surveyed regularly to determine their preferences regarding new and existing menu items, as well as the operational aspects of the breakfast program. This could involve taste tests or informal surveys at breakfast. Giving students a voice in the breakfast program can generate buy-in and bolster more efficient execution of the BAB program. Working with student leaders or student groups to obtain feedback can also provide valuable insight regarding student opinions about the breakfast program.



Utilize peer influence to promote school breakfast. Student volunteers or ambassadors can give a nudge to their peers to eat breakfast. [Breakfast Nudges](#) are subtle acts of positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions that try to influence a student's behavior.

Understand their schedules. Often times hunger comes on later in the morning for middle and high school students. Paying attention to when students are hungry and adapting to their needs will not only increase breakfast participation, but it will also support academic learning because students won't be focused on their hunger.

PROMOTE BREAKFAST

Middle and high school meal programs are often competing with the nearby coffee shop or fast food restaurant. Offer breakfast items that resemble popular commercial items, and market them with enthusiasm. Showing students that school breakfast can be just as appealing as breakfast at the nearby cafe, but cost less and is more nutritious, can be a win-win for schools, students, and parents.

Hold Breakfast Contests. Offer contents and challenges to build excitement around the breakfast program. Raffles with prizes are always popular with students. Each time a student eats breakfast their name is entered in the raffle. Another option is to create a breakfast members reward card. When a student eats breakfast, their card gets stamped. Once their card is full, they earn a prize. Ensure prizes are specific to middle and high school interests to boost contest participation.



Educate Students and Parents. Both students and parents may be unaware of the breakfast program, including how breakfast is being served, the menu items offered, and the time and cost of breakfast. Display posters around school, send home flyers, and include breakfast details in the school's morning announcements. Social media can also be a great way to connect with students and parents.

Learn about more promotion strategies via [School Breakfast Promotion Strategies](#).



Breakfast participation jumped by 122% in Beardstown Junior and Senior High School by changing the breakfast model from traditional cafeteria to Grab and Go to the classroom. The principal noticed the new breakfast model improved attendance and increased classroom productivity. Teachers noticed students being more attentive and better academic performances. [Learn more about the Illinois school's breakfast program.](#)

There are many ways middle and high schools can make breakfast a success. Remembering that students are the customers is the key. For additional support with BAB models and student engagement, visit the [Center for Best Practices website](#).