

# Breakfast After the Bell Myths

School breakfast can bring successes to students, classrooms, and schools by providing kids with the healthy food they need to learn and grow. Students often see improved academic performance and teachers often see reduced disciplinary problems as a result of kids eating school breakfast. There are several Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) models that help ensure more students have access to breakfast, including Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC), Grab and Go to the Classroom, and Second Chance Breakfast. Despite the benefits of breakfast, it can still get a bad wrap. Below are the most common myths, along with the facts, about school breakfast.



## MYTH: IT TAKES AWAY FROM INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

**FACT:** Students usually take 10-15 minutes to eat their breakfast, including clean-up time. Teachers often spend that time constructively on classroom activities.<sup>1</sup> Some teachers report that they gain instructional time due to fewer behavioral disruptions, visits to the school nurse, tardiness and absenteeism. BIC has been shown to increase student scores on standardized math and reading tests, particularly in vulnerable populations, proving that when students aren't focused on hunger pangs, they can concentrate on the lessons being taught in the classroom.<sup>2,3</sup>

## MYTH: THE FOOD IS UNHEALTHY



**FACT:** School breakfast is healthier than most people realize. Schools participating in the National School Breakfast Program must adhere to robust nutrition guidelines provided by United States Department of Agriculture. Here are some facts about school breakfast:

- Grains at school are whole grain rich, low in sugar and packed with vitamins and minerals,
- Juices are 100% fruit/vegetables,
- Calorie levels have an age appropriate minimum and maximum,
- Saturated fat is less than 10% of total calories, and
- Breakfast must be low in sodium.<sup>6</sup>

Find out more with [School Breakfast is Healthier Than You Think](#).

## MYTH: IT MAKES A MESS

**FACT:** When students and staff are trained to properly dispose of breakfast items, BAB is a simple and clean experience. By developing a holistic, smart system involving the school nutrition staff and custodians, trash issues can be overcome. Students can even help with clean-up. Sometimes something as simple as a separate trash can for breakfast trash can make a big difference. Teachers find that with appropriate planning and clear procedures, BAB can become a seamless part of the morning routine. Learn about a typical set-up and clean-up process for BIC with this [teacher guide](#).

“Before the program started, I said there would be five spills a day. That first month, I don't think there were five spills total.”  
CUSTODIAN,  
NEW YORK

### MYTH: BAB BURDENS TEACHERS

**FACT:** Teachers know that students who are hungry cannot concentrate and may act out or disrupt class, which makes teaching even harder. As a result, teachers spend roughly \$300 per year of their own money to feed hungry students in their classrooms.<sup>4</sup> BAB alleviates this burden on teachers, and provides students with a healthy meal to last them to lunch. Studies have shown that bringing universal breakfast into the classroom significantly improves students' behavior, particularly students' level of respect and preparedness for class, which means teachers can spend more time teaching and less time disciplining students.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, BAB fosters an environment for social-emotional learning as students authentically practice relationship skills and decision-making.

“I recently had a student coming to school hungry. I connected him with our free school breakfast program. Within a couple of weeks, I saw a disinterested, unmotivated, uninvolved student become a talkative, humorous, optimistic scholar.”  
TEACHER, ILLINOIS

### MYTH: KIDS WILL EAT TOO MUCH



**FACT:** Students who participate in school breakfast are more likely to consume diets that are adequate or exceed standards for important vitamins and minerals, and have better overall diet quality than those who eat breakfast elsewhere or skip breakfast.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup> In fact, a 2015 study published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics concluded that Breakfast in the Classroom was not associated with an increase in calorie intake at breakfast time or throughout the day.<sup>7</sup>

### MYTH: BAB IS PAID FOR BY SCHOOL FUNDS



**FACT:** The more kids who eat school breakfast, the more revenue the district has to make their breakfast program a success. This is because schools that participate in the National School Breakfast Program (SBP) are eligible to receive federal reimbursement for every breakfast they serve.<sup>12</sup> Other revenue sources come from state and local government, a la carte sales, and student payments.<sup>13</sup> The school breakfast budget operates independently from the district general fund and individual school budgets. So school breakfast is never in competition with school supplies or teacher salaries. Additionally, the school nutrition department operates like a non-profit, so any revenue incurred from the SBP must be reinvested into the school meals program. Learn more with this [Guide to School Breakfast Funding](#).

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