

# SCHOOL BREAKFAST IS HEALTHIER THAN YOU THINK



School breakfast provides students with a healthy start to the school day. School breakfast is healthier than most people realize, and can benefit kids, classrooms and communities.

## HOW HEALTHY IS SCHOOL BREAKFAST?

Even though food items provided to students at school sometimes look the same as breakfast foods found in grocery stores, convenience stores or fast food restaurants, their nutritional profile is very different. Schools participating in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) must adhere to [nutrition guidelines](#) supported by science and provided by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

For example, General Mills' Cinnamon Toast Crunch Cereal Bar can be found in both grocery stores and schools. The cereal bar in schools is served as part of a reimbursable school breakfast, which must meet USDA nutrition guidelines; whereas, the cereal bar sold in grocery stores or at the corner market does not have to meet any nutritional requirements.

Here are some facts about school breakfast:

- 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.
- Breakfast is low in sodium.



Dietary Comparison of Cinnamon Toast Crunch Cereal Bar		
Nutritional Content	School Breakfast	Store Bought
Calories	150	180
Total Fat	3g (5% of DV*)	4g (6% of DV)
Sugars	9g	14g
Sat. Fat	.5g (3% of DV)	2g (10% of DV)
Sodium	110mg (5% of DV)	150mg (6% of DV)
Dietary Fiber	3g (11% of DV)	1g (4% of DV)

\*DV = Daily Value

## HOW ARE BREAKFAST MENUS PLANNED?

Menus are planned by school nutrition professionals. Breakfast items are student-tested regularly to ensure that the menu contains items that the students like and will consume. If unpopular items are served, students won't select them, which means students lose out on the benefits of breakfast. Therefore it's in the best interest of schools to offer students options that they will enjoy.



## DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE ADDED BENEFITS OF BREAKFAST



School Breakfast is much more than a way to fill an empty belly. It helps kids focus, contributes to higher attendance rates, and kids who eat school breakfast tend to be healthier overall.

Students who eat school breakfast attend, on average, 1.5 more days of school per year.<sup>1</sup> Students who eat school breakfast score, on average, 17.5% higher on standardized math scores.<sup>2</sup> Kids who eat school breakfast are more likely to consume milk and fruit as part of their breakfast.<sup>3</sup>

Children in low-income families who eat school breakfast have a better overall diet than children who miss breakfast or get breakfast somewhere else.<sup>4</sup> Children who participate in the school breakfast program are less likely to be obese, overweight, and are more likely to have a lower body mass index (BMI).<sup>5,6,7,8</sup>

## YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT!

If you would like to learn more about breakfast in your school and/or share your thoughts and ideas, please contact your School Nutrition Director. Through collaboration and creativity, positive partnerships are formed. For additional resources and information on School Breakfast, visit the [Center for Best Practices](#).

<sup>1</sup> [No Kid Hungry Starts with Breakfast](#). Share Our Strength, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [No Kid Hungry Starts with Breakfast](#). Share Our Strength, 2015

<sup>3</sup> School meals: types of foods offered to and consumed by children at lunch and breakfast. Condon, E. M., Crepinsek, M. K., & Fox, M. K. (2009). *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(2 Supplement 1), S67-S78.

<sup>4</sup> Eating breakfast greatly improves school children's diet quality. Basiotis, P. P., Lino, M., & Anand, R. S., 1999.

<sup>5</sup> School breakfast and body mass index: a longitudinal observational study of middle school students. Wang, S., Schwartz, M. B., Shebi, F. M., Read, M., Henderson, K. E., & Ickovics, J. R. (2016). *Pediatric Obesity*, published online ahead of print.

<sup>6</sup> Estimation of treatment effects without an exclusion restriction: with an application to the analysis of the School Breakfast Program Millimet, D. L., & Tchernis, R. (2013). *Journal of Applied Economics*, 28, 982-1017.

<sup>7</sup> School nutrition programs and the incidence of childhood obesity. Millimet, D. L., Tchernis, R., & Husain, M. (2010). *Journal of Human Resources*, 45(3), 640-654.

<sup>8</sup> School breakfast program but not school lunch program participation is associated with lower body mass index. Gleason, P. M., & Dodd, A. H. (2009). *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(2 Supplement 1), S118-S128.