



Food Research & Action Center



A Union of Professionals

Breakfast Blueprint

Breakfast After the Bell Programs Support Learning

July 2017 ■ www.FRAC.org ■ www.AFT.org



Breakfast Blueprint

Plan for a Successful Launch

“Start slow. Do a lot of preplanning so change doesn’t come as a shock. Some may feel like, ‘I really do want students to have breakfast, but I don’t know what was wrong with the old system.’ There has to be some explanation about why you’re changing to this new model and some recourse if it’s not working. How can folks share their challenges?”

— Union vice president for elementary schools, New York



Implementing a new breakfast service model alters daily operations and routines for many staff, including custodians, food service workers and instructional personnel. Without clear guidance on new expectations and routines, many staff can become frustrated and dissatisfied. Successful breakfast after the bell programs facilitate smooth transitions by communicating the district's intentions along with broad guidelines to participating schools.

Develop a flexible district plan: First, choose a service model or a combination of models. (See Table 1 for an overview of the breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go” and second chance breakfast models.) While weighing the benefits of each, consider the pros and cons of maintaining some breakfast service in the cafeteria. Then, draft an implementation plan that broadly addresses the following logistics:

Timing: Many districts phase transitions, such as by starting with elementary schools or working first with buildings where the schedule easily accommodates second chance breakfast. Consider:

- How will this impact the school day and schedules?

- Can homeroom, advisory periods or other regular elements of the schedule be leveraged?
- Will bus transportation be impacted?
- When will the program launch?

Equipment and resources: Breakfast after the bell programs usually increase the number of spaces where food is served. Many aspects of the school building’s layout can impact breakfast distribution, including student traffic, cafeteria location, number of floors, elevator accessibility and size, as well as classroom spacing. Assess the need for additional kitchen storage space or additional tables, coolers or kiosks for food distribution. Maintain high safety and hygiene standards for all spaces where food is served by regularly distributing cleaning supplies. Consider:

- Are new equipment or supplies needed?
- How and when will teachers and paraprofessionals receive classroom cleaning supplies?
- How will staff members communicate the need for assistance with cleaning up larger spills?

Staffing: Collaborate closely with staff unions to examine how scheduling may change as student demand increases with a breakfast after the bell program. Consider:

- Which staff members will distribute food to the classrooms/kiosks and at what time(s)?
- Which staff members will pick up trash and at what time(s)?
- How many food service personnel are needed and at what time(s)?
- How many custodians are needed and at what time(s)?



Training: Breakfast after the bell programs often require diverse staff to work in close concert. It is important that all stakeholders understand the professional guidelines and expectations of their colleagues, such as the role of standardized testing in teachers' evaluation, the federal requirements for meal participation tracking for food service staff, and the safety standards that guide custodians. Consider:

- Who will train teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians and food service personnel on new routines related to breakfast preparation, meal distribution, waste management and expectations for cleanup—and when?
- Who will conduct refresher trainings or train new staff—and how often?

Student needs: Choose models and related program logistics that account for students' developmental stages and capacity. For instance, older students are often more independent and may excel with a "grab and go" model, while elementary school students may need more assistance for breakfast in the classroom. Additionally, many special educators report that making the transition with minimal changes to activities, breakfast packaging and even menu items helps prevent behavioral challenges. Consider:

- Which blend of models will best allow schools to execute successful programs?
- How will the program meet the unique needs of different student populations, such as students with disabilities?
- Who will train students on new morning routines (such as breakfast pickup locations and cleanup expectations) and when?

Tailor the program to fit your schools

“Every custodian is going to have his or her own different style. Every school is going to be slightly different. You have schools that are two stories and three stories and stuff like that. So school staff know best how to get it done.”

— Elementary school custodian, West Virginia

Introduce the plan to schools by hosting information sessions on the district's goals. Next, conduct training that clarifies how the program is intended to function. Whenever possible, training should include a dry run so staff can see the program in action and address any potential oversights. Food service leaders are often best equipped to develop and conduct trainings for faculty and staff, while educators may prefer to train students. As each school learns more, seek feedback and examine opportunities to reallocate resources, shift schedules, revisit objectives, clarify roles, strengthen training and expectations, or otherwise adjust and directly respond to anticipated challenges.

Districtwide excellence

The Syracuse City School District in New York is a “top performer” in school breakfast, ensuring its more than 10,000 low-income students are offered a nutritious morning meal every day.¹⁰ Breakfast after the bell models are a key component of Syracuse’s success, along with the following factors:

- Through the Community Eligibility Provision program—which allows high poverty school to offer meal service to all students at no charge, regardless of economic status—every Syracuse school offers free breakfast and lunch to every student. The district offers a snack and an evening meal to all students (through the Child and Adult Care Food Program). Finally, a partnership with the local grocer brings nutrition education to elementary schools about the importance of fruit and vegetables.
- Syracuse’s vision for students’ food security accommodates variation in its 33 schools. Each principal may choose to use traditional cafeteria service, breakfast in the classroom,

vending machines or a hybrid model. Nineteen schools are choosing to do breakfast in the classroom and eight are offering breakfast in vending machines.

- For large schools, the Syracuse Teachers Association (STA) coordinates with the district to ensure each food service worker is given an additional 10 minutes of morning preparation time for every 200 students served. STA also facilitates early arrivals for days when breakfast service includes many menu components so food service personnel have adequate preparation time.
- Despite school-level variability, Syracuse maintains efficient routines. For example, annual training ensures that food service staff, cooks and recess staff are ready to support any school and model. Moreover, the union, the food service director, building leaders, custodians and cafeteria managers regularly connect to improve the program and discuss other topics, such as the impact of menu changes.

¹⁰ Food Research & Action Center. (2016) “School Breakfast: Making It Work in Large School Districts.” <http://frac.org/research/resource-library/school-breakfast-making-work-large-school-districts-sy-2014-2015>.

Launch! Once all school staff members are comfortable with the expectations and logistical details related to their transition, communicate to the broader public about the official launch date, the impetus for shifting the breakfast service model, and the district's goals for the new program. Robocalls, school welcome packets, newsletters and the school website can all help announce the change to parents and families. Solicit volunteers to help on the launch day or with other

transition activities. Let students know that breakfast service will soon change, using posters, contests, giveaways and loudspeaker announcements. The launch may also provide a timely opportunity for student champions to encourage their peers to eat more school meals and to offer input on breakfast menu items. Sharing content with local press outlets, community newsletters and listservs may further generate support.

Table 1: Breakfast After the Bell Models and Logistical Considerations

	Breakfast in the classroom	“Grab and go”	Second chance
	Breakfast is delivered directly to the classroom and students eat at their desks during the first 20-25 minutes of the school day. Teachers choose how to use this time to best suit the needs of their lesson plans, whether that is structuring classroom time for group activities, independent work, class announcements or taking attendance. This model is most often used in elementary schools and tends to yield the highest student participation.	Students typically pick up a bagged breakfast from kiosks located in high-traffic areas of the school building and bring it to the classroom. This model is well-suited for secondary schools, as it provides students with more flexibility in the morning and does not disrupt the flow of schedule blocks.	Students can get breakfast from a designated location during an extended break after first period. This model works particularly well in secondary schools because older students are often not hungry early in the morning.
Meal delivery and distribution	Meals are delivered by food service staff or picked up by students, and distributed by teachers	Meals are distributed by food service staff	Meals are distributed by food service staff
Timing	20-25 minutes of class time	10-15 minutes of class time	Students eat during an extended break of 10-15 minutes between periods
Trash removal	Food service or custodial staff	Custodial staff	Custodial staff
Equipment and approximate costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coolers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Small cooler, 75 quart (\$40) —Large cooler, 120 quart (\$80) ■ Carts on wheels (\$90) or rolling coolers ■ Classroom cleaning supplies (\$15-30 per month per classroom depending on menu and class size) and mini broom/dustpan (\$7) ■ Trash can, 50 gallon (\$70) or trash bags (\$20 per month per classroom) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kiosk (\$2,000-\$4,000) or tables ■ Coolers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Small cooler, 75 quart (\$40) —Large cooler, 120 quart (\$80) ■ Bags for meals (\$15-20 per month) ■ Classroom cleaning supplies (\$15-30 per month per classroom depending on menu and class size) and mini broom/dustpan (\$7) ■ Trash can, 50 gallon (\$70) or trash bags (\$20 per month per classroom) 	



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