



# Breakfast Blueprint

Breakfast After the Bell  
Programs Support Learning

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## Strategies for Boosting Student Satisfaction

*“What they would be eating at home, my population, would be like a bean burrito or atole.”*

— Elementary school teacher, New Mexico



Exemplary breakfast after the bell programs balance student preferences with a commitment to nutrition standards. Successful menus have a variety of options, reflect students’ cultural tastes and offer items prepared in-house. Food service staff can use several strategies to enhance breakfast after the bell offerings.

**Popularize menus:** Draw more students into your breakfast after the bell program by developing attractive menus. These tactics often increase a program’s popularity:

- **Variety:** Increase menu options to improve student choice and buy-in. When possible, implement “offer verse serve,” a policy that allows students to decline certain required food components, to further increase student choice.
- **Branding:** Mimic the marketing tactics of restaurants by branding items with clever, descriptive labels, such as naming strawberry smoothies “berry blast smoothies” or calling a whole-grain-rich option “all-day energy boosting.”
- **Customization:** Include menu items that reflect students’ cultural backgrounds. Offering foods that students eat at home could encourage increased breakfast participation. For example, one school in the South offers grit bowls on their school breakfast menu, while some Southwest schools boast breakfast burritos as a menu favorite.

- **Taste tests:** Prior to committing to a new breakfast item, consider including students from the student council, a local wellness committee or another organized student group in a taste test. Offer breakfast item samples during the lunch hour and gather feedback. Ask about elements that the students like or don’t like to guide future breakfast item selections.

- **Data:** Identify ways to improve the current breakfast menu through a brief survey. In many breakfast after the bell models, instructors are present while students eat. Connect with teachers, paraprofessionals and students about which items are the most and least popular on the current menu.

**Maximize nutritional quality:** Consider preparing more breakfast items in-house, such as hard-boiled eggs, oatmeal cups, low-sugar muffins or smoothies, to increase the availability of scratch-cooked items and decrease the use of processed foods. Discuss with stakeholders what advances have been made to incorporate locally procured food and more fresh fruits and vegetables. Leverage farm-to-school offerings as a way to bring in locally sourced, fresh goods into breakfast, such as cheeses, yogurt, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.



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