



Breakfast Blueprint

Breakfast After the Bell
Programs Support Learning

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Strategies for a Productive Classroom

“We try to ask the students to eat and do their morning routine at the same time (i.e., clocking in, checking planners, etc.).”

— Paraprofessional for adult learners, Oregon



Despite the clear benefits gained by students who eat a healthy school breakfast, many educators feel pressure to focus narrowly on improving students' standardized test scores. Well-designed breakfast after the bell programs complement morning instructional activities, have been shown to improve test scores, and help educators address the whole child.

In some schools using these programs, most often in secondary settings, students arrive to their instructional space with a bagged breakfast. In other schools, breakfast is delivered directly to the classroom sometime during the morning. Educators should establish routines of core activities to be completed each morning so that breakfast service can be accommodated whenever it arrives. Students may:

- Conduct independent work, including “Do Nows,” fluency folders, independent reading or homework review.
- Finish individual, standardized assessments or check in with the teacher one-on-one.
- Review content or build prior knowledge with hands-free teaching aids, such as videos or podcasts.
- Complete classroom assignments, such as reviewing portfolios or handing out missed work to students who were absent.
- Assist with breakfast logistics, such as sweeping, disposing of packaging or wiping down workspaces.

In any classroom, assignments should be differentiated to align with students' developmental stage, ability and maturity. While students finish self-directed duties, teachers can address important tasks to start the day, such as taking attendance, collecting homework and setting up technology. Additional adults, such as paraprofessionals or parent volunteers, can help to make breakfast service run smoothly by keeping students on task or clarifying expectations.

Breakfast can be a naturally social time, and teachers should choose whether to leverage or redirect this energy. Some educators may encourage students to connect with peers, such as by working in small groups to complete designated tasks or hosting a whole group morning meeting. Others may use timers, a posted agenda or music to direct students' attention to specific activities while eating. Whatever the classroom procedures, it is important that students are held accountable

for completing their responsibilities. The most successful morning routines involving breakfast are flexible and clearly define student expectations.



In the classroom spotlight

One teacher in Texas shares the routine for her fifth-grade classroom:

“For the first hour, we know announcements are going to happen, we’re going to get our morning work done, we’re going to eat breakfast at some point. We just have a list. The first thing we do is shake hands—I greet the kids eye to eye, and that gives me an opportunity to assess. Anything that’s out of routine, I try to handle right there at the door.

“Inside the room, the chairs are already unstacked because I have a chair leader, the pencils are already sharpened, everything’s ready to go on the desk, and I have leaders that have already done that. All

the students have to do is go put their backpack up and get their stuff organized. I also have a whole list of routines on the board, such as telling them to take out their homework folder, their planner and whatever we’re working on first, and telling them to put any communication from home in my pink basket. Then, if they say, ‘What are we supposed to be doing right now?’ I would just point at the board to remind them.

“I really think one of the keys to being successful is just having a lot of this routine stuff toward the beginning of the morning so that it lets you be more flexible and think, ‘Well, OK, we’ll just skip that and move to the next activity and then go back to it.’”



Food Research & Action Center
1200 18th Street, NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

202.986.2200
www.frac.org



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American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave NW
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