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Breakfast Blueprint

Breakfast After the Bell Programs Support Learning

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Breakfast Blueprint

Evaluate Program Success
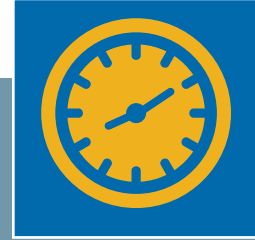
"My school provides all students with free breakfast, which we have done for a few years. Our campus is huge, and breakfast is served in only one area, near the bus loop. Kiosks might help students arrive to class on time."

— High school teacher, Florida

Breakfast after the bell programs are often promoted because they boost the number of students receiving school meals and they support the learning environment. These programs also typically impact many other aspects of school operations. To sustain a strong program, your district's leadership team should examine how the program contributes to student well-being and look for opportunities to improve logistics. (For more on district leadership teams, see "Set Up Your Program for Success.") Collect, analyze and apply stakeholder input to reveal important information about the capacity and resources necessary to implement the program effectively. Timely program modifications can boost stakeholder satisfaction, reduce schools' adjustment time and promote program sustainability and efficiency.

Identify program goals: Determine the questions you seek to answer about the impact of the breakfast after the bell program, such as:

- Is the program reaching more students?

- Is the program reaching the most vulnerable students (those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals)?

- How does the program support academic achievement?

- Are school building spaces clean?

- Are stakeholders satisfied with the program?

Select key metrics: Generally, when evaluating a breakfast after the bell program, two types of metrics can be analyzed: student outcomes and quality improvement. Measuring student outcomes, such as breakfast participation, attendance and tardiness rates or academic achievement, is a great way to show the impact of a breakfast program on the learning environment. Quality improvement data, such as cleanliness or stakeholder satisfaction, are valuable for identifying and addressing any logistical challenges. A robust evaluation should include metrics to measure both student outcomes and quality improvement opportunities.

Collect and analyze data: Consider using data already collected by the school or district. If needed, discuss options for gathering additional data. School personnel are powerfully positioned to observe daily operations and are often keen to communicate school-specific strategies for improvement. Interviews and focus groups can help to reveal satisfaction levels and logistical challenges that may not be captured with a survey. Analyze data over time and by subgroups, such as profession, school and grade level, to uncover unique perspectives and patterns. Share the findings with the full district team to identify opportunities to streamline program implementation and to highlight program successes.

Table 2 offers recommendations on how and when to collect data for potential metrics.

Table 2: Evaluating Program Success—Selecting Indicators and Developing an Evaluation Plan						
	Type of metric	Potential metrics	Data source(s)	Frequency of collection		Frequency of analysis
				New program (e.g., in first year)	Mature program	
Reach of breakfast program	Student outcome	■ Overall breakfast average daily participation (ADP) ■ Breakfast ADP among students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals	School meal tracking system	Schools routinely collect this data		At least once monthly
Behavior	Student outcome	■ Number of days students are tardy ■ Chronic absenteeism: number of days students are absent, truant, suspended and/or expelled [11] ■ Number of student referrals for discipline	Attendance and discipline records	Schools routinely collect this data		At least once per semester
Academic proficiency [12]	Student outcome	■ Proportion of students posting proficient grades on standardized exams ■ Proportion of students with GPAs over a school-selected threshold (e.g., 3.2)	Classroom academic records; exam score reports	Schools routinely collect this data		At least once annually
Staff satisfaction	Quality improvement	Proportion of teachers, custodians, food service personnel, paraprofessionals and others who "agree" or "strongly agree" with positive statements about the program	Surveys; focus groups; interviews	At least quarterly	At least once annually	As often as collected
Building cleanliness	Quality improvement	■ Frequency of spills requiring custodial support ■ Frequency of pest issues ■ Frequency of improper trash disposal	Survey; waste assessment; ratio of custodians to square feet with meal service	Weekly/ biweekly	At least quarterly	As often as collected
Student satisfaction	Quality improvement	■ Menu cycle length ■ Frequency of fresh fruit and vegetable options ■ Frequency of scratch cooking offered ■ Popularity and likeability	Menus; survey; student taste test teams	Weekly/ biweekly	At least quarterly	As often as collected

[11] Chronic absenteeism is an early warning indicator that a student is at risk for school failure. The more often data are reviewed, the more likely a school is to identify opportunities for impactful intervention. Attendance Works offers free school and district attendance tracking tools.

[12] A number of factors impact academic achievement and, as a result, it may be difficult to detect a change in this measure without using more advanced evaluation designs that are outside the scope of the *"Breakfast Blueprint"* guide.

Engage stakeholders: When collecting, analyzing and reporting data, the district team should connect with diverse stakeholders. Strategize about the best ways to include the entire school community in evaluation efforts, including decision makers, teachers working with students of diverse developmental capabilities, custodial and food service staff, parents and students. Moreover, be clear about the expectations for the collection of any new data and how the data will be used to improve the program.

Engage students, families, staff and the broader public with annual reports that:

■ Acknowledge staff, such as through co-workers' or students' words of praise;

■ Announce positive student outcomes;

■ Credit relevant team members, staff or partners with their roles in success; and

■ Explain program growth through coordinated quality improvement.

Finally, consider sharing press releases or promotional materials with district leaders, partners and local media outlets to acknowledge successes, generate positive coverage and build enthusiasm.

Evaluation supports a smooth transition

As Meriden Public Schools in Meriden, Conn., transitioned to "grab and go" and vending models, the superintendent and director of food and nutrition services explained to stakeholders that they aimed to:

■ Evaluate positive outcomes of increased school breakfast participation;

■ Obtain positive and negative feedback regarding participation in, and support of, the program; and

■ Determine action steps for improvement.

With a district food services staff member on-site "every day until we were confident the [school-level cafeteria] staff could handle it alone," they ensured that schools were satisfied with program logistics. Additionally, the district relied on a strong labor-management partnership and surveys of parents, students and teachers to make small changes and accommodate the needs of specific buildings and staff, such as adjusting the location of "grab and go" carts.

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