



Breakfast Blueprint

Breakfast After the Bell
Programs Support Learning

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Take Your Breakfast After the Bell Program to the Next Level

Breakfast after the bell programs offer excellent opportunities to help students cultivate leadership qualities and introduce them to new fresh fruits and vegetables. The National Farm to School Network and the Center for Green Schools provide district leadership teams with tools and resources to elevate breakfast after the bell programs with local foods and environmentally friendly procedures.

Farm-to-school



“I’m a firm believer in variety. There are so many other options they could get. You know, fresh fruits—I would like to see more bananas and more other fruits and vegetables. I’d like to see hard-boiled eggs. We had those one time, and they absolutely loved them. Maybe yogurt— that’s a protein they can have.”

— Preschool cafeteria manager, Illinois



Farm-to-school offerings enrich the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and

local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools, as well as early childhood education and care sites. More than 42,000 schools across all 50 states and Washington, D.C., report [*benefits of farm to school*](#), including increased participation in school meal programs, lower school meal program costs and reduced food waste in the cafeteria. There are ample opportunities to integrate farm-to-school activities in breakfast after the bell programs, which can help achieve exemplary menus and increase student willingness to try new foods. Here are three simple ideas for integrating farm to school into your district’s breakfast service.

Incorporate local foods: Food service personnel can generate excitement for breakfast menus by incorporating local foods. In addition to fruits and vegetables, local food products can include proteins, beans, dairy, herbs, grains and more. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you start exploring options to use local items in your breakfast program:

- **Define “local.”** You get to decide. Local can mean from your county, your state or your region. Consider your area’s growing season and the types of foods grown and produced near you.
- **Explore different procurement options.** Buying local can mean purchasing directly from a producer, requesting items through your food service provider, or sourcing products from a third-party distributor, farmers market or grocery store food hub.
- **Start small.** Start by focusing on one local item to include in just one meal, and building up from there. Create a flexible menu that easily allows you to switch in whatever is fresh and in season.

Serve student-grown produce: While your school garden may not produce enough food to make up a large portion of the breakfast menu, food service personnel can consider using student-grown produce to increase student engagement and as a tool for nutrition education. Simple ways to integrate school garden produce into breakfast items may include herbs in scrambled eggs, berries with yogurt or tomatoes for fresh salsa alongside a breakfast burrito.

Connect to curriculum: Educators can help healthy habits take root by connecting classroom curriculum to the fresh, local food served for breakfast. While farm to school is a natural fit for science, math and geography lessons, there are no limits to food, nutrition and agriculture-based education. Utilizing farm-to-school principles to teach language, health, visual arts, cultural history and more reinforces healthy eating and fosters educational diversity and creativity both inside and outside the classroom.

Integrating farm-to-school activities in breakfast after the bell programs can be a highly beneficial strategy for developing healthy, appetizing menus and nourishing students for a full day of learning. To learn more about farm to school and to explore resources for implementation, visit <http://www.farmtoschool.org>.

Farm to school in action

Boston Public Schools brings farm to school into breakfast by offering students a healthy muffin that features local apples, zucchini and carrots. Muffins are a versatile product that can easily incorporate many in-season food items (e.g., strawberries in the spring, pumpkin in the fall) and are easily portable for students eating breakfast outside of the cafeteria.

Consider how other local foods, such as yogurt cups, applesauce, whole fruit, berries, potatoes, honey, maple syrup, granola, cream cheese, locally baked bagels, English muffins, tortillas and whole-grain breads, can be incorporated into breakfast service.



Green Schools



“Composting and recycling should go along with breakfast. I wish there was more information in the hands of teachers and administrators about the importance of healthy meals, particularly breakfast, as it relates to academic achievement. I believe connecting healthy food to academics is a way to speak the same language and mutually achieve our goals.”

— School district sustainability coordinator, North Carolina



Green schools sustain the world students live in, enhance their health and well-being, and prepare them to be leaders who embrace global sustainability. Schools and districts that embrace these principles, including the nearly 100 school districts participating in the [Center for Green Schools](#) sustainability network, model healthy personal choices that are also good for the earth, including through breakfast after the bell programs.

Divert waste from landfills: A study in Minneapolis found that schools generate an average half-pound of waste per person per day, about one fourth of which is food.¹³ Green schools significantly decrease their carbon footprint by diverting common items from the trash. For instance, plastic bottles and cardboard can be recycled while organic food waste, liquids and nonrecyclable paper can be composted.

- **Dig deep.** Identify the kinds of materials tossed with a waste audit. Then conduct interviews and site visits to identify opportunities to use less, use items more efficiently or better divert waste. California’s Integrated Waste Management Board developed [“Seeing Green Through Waste Prevention”](#) to guide school districts.

- **Start at the source.** Successful waste management programs begin with purchasing food that has less packaging and can be easily separated into compostable, recyclable and landfill containers. For example, food that comes in a single container made of a single type of material (paper or plastic, aluminum or cardboard), instead of a combination of multiple materials, is easier to sort.
- **Sort in the classroom.** Implement procedures to sort waste before it is removed from the classroom. Use separate bags in the classroom to collect landfill, recyclable, compostable and unopened food items. Alternatively, set up sorting stations in a central location right outside the classroom, allowing students to quickly toss trash, paper, plastic, compost and food donation items in separate containers.

¹³ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. (Sep 2010). “Digging Deep Through School Trash: A waste composition analysis of trash, recycling and organic material discarded at public schools in Minnesota.” <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/school-waste-study>.

Facilitate food sharing: Redistributing unopened food served through the school meals program to those in need can minimize food waste. While both the [*Good Samaritan Food Donation Act*](#)¹⁴ and the [*National School Lunch Act*](#) allow and encourage schools to donate surplus food to local organizations or families, school faculty and staff must pay careful attention to local health code regulations. Contact local health officials to understand any existing regulations at the district, county or state levels.

- **Make a strong plan.** Food donation programs often rely on a strong community partner willing to collect and distribute unopened food. To ensure that trash does not contaminate donations and that food is held at the correct temperature for safety, school personnel should clearly instruct students on how to sort food waste and designate a monitor for food collection.
- **Make it work for breakfast.** Even for schools with successful food share tables or donation bins in the cafeteria, different strategies are helpful for breakfast after the bell programs with service in instructional spaces. Though cafeterias generally collect all donations in one place, classrooms typically benefit from several collection points. Furthermore, whereas sorting is a student responsibility in most cafeterias, teachers are often responsible for correctly sorting items in classroom-based service. Finally, to facilitate the quick transport of food from the classroom to refrigerators, schools should establish and communicate clear staff roles and procedures that take into account the building layout, kitchen equipment and custodial contracts.

Schools significantly impact resource use in their communities. A breakfast after the bell program is a great opportunity to show students that their future and the future of the environment matters.

Recycling champions

Approximately half of the Clark County School District's schools implement breakfast after the bell programs, and many teachers and students participate in recycling and sorting waste. Classes grab breakfast each morning from a set point, typically a multipurpose room, and students eat in the classroom. After they are done eating, students empty excess food into 5-gallon pails with liners, both provided by the food service department. Empty food and drink containers are placed in classroom recycling and landfill baskets, and custodians pick up the baskets each night. "Teachers model emptying the food and drink containers and monitor appropriate behavior until the students get it right," says the district's sustainability coordinator. "It usually only takes a couple of days and the kids are recycling champions!"

Learn more about the important role of district sustainability coordinators with Center for Green School's 2014 report, "[*Managing Sustainability in School Districts.*](#)"



¹⁴ Feeding America explains how the Good Samaritan Food Donation Act encourages strong partnerships for food donations: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/ways-to-give/give-food/become-a-product-partner/protecting-our-food-partners.html?referrer=https://www.google.com>.



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