



Identifying Key Stakeholders

This section is intended to provide you with an overview of the many important stakeholders who are likely to play a role in helping you to establish or expand a school breakfast program. It is very important that you generate support from these individuals, as doing so will greatly increase your program's chances of success. Achieving buy-in is especially critical when you select an alternative serving method that is not based in the school cafeteria, such as breakfast in the classroom or breakfast on the bus. In these cases, teachers, janitorial staff, or even transportation workers will be playing an active role in making sure that students have the opportunity to eat breakfast every morning. When you begin planning your approach to generating buy-in among these stakeholders, refer to the **Developing a Marketing Strategy** document (within *Marketing Guidance*) for more information.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Superintendents and principals both have a strong interest in the academic success of their students. For instance, some schools serve breakfast on test days because studies show an improvement in performance when students have eaten breakfast. However, breakfast is important every school day. Students who start their day by eating breakfast are more alert and attentive in class, and this can translate into higher academic achievement.

Principals play an important role in the decision to implement or expand the School Breakfast Program. They also lead teachers in the goal of developing successful students. They are role models for students and the leaders in the educational community. As such, principals can strongly influence the success of the School Breakfast Program as well as the success of their students.

When considering how to establish or expand a school breakfast program, a superintendent or principal may be concerned about:

Scheduling

The School Breakfast Program supports various methods of serving students, so times of service may vary from program to program. However, certain methods, like Breakfast in the Classroom, can take only 10 minutes and may even complement classroom instruction. Other methods allow students to eat their breakfast during a scheduled break between classes or on

the way to class. If most of the school's students cannot make it in time for breakfast served at school, consider Breakfast on the Bus. If scheduling is an issue, there is almost always a method of service that can accommodate your school's needs.

Costs

Offering breakfast may have additional labor and food costs, but in most cases the student participation is high enough to support the program. Not only will revenue be generated through breakfast sales, but Federal reimbursement for breakfast can cover much of the additional costs. The breakfast program may even provide a small profit that could be used creatively to improve the food service operation or further develop a school's nutrition education efforts.

Resources

You will want to demonstrate to the superintendent or principal that there are additional resources available to help support the breakfast program. In most cases, State Agencies administer Federal programs. Typically, the State Office of Public Instruction, Department of Education, or Department of Agriculture will provide guidance and support for schools implementing Child Nutrition Programs. These departments are interested in the success of your students too. Support for food service staff when implementing the School Breakfast Program is available through various organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture – Special Nutrition Programs (USDA-SNP), the National Dairy Council (NDC), and a number of advocacy groups that focus on school nutrition initiatives. Each of these organizations can assist a school in implementing the School Breakfast Program. Other school districts are also a resource. School food service staff can emulate their peers' experiences.

Participation Levels

Surveying students or hosting taste tests in order to determine their food preferences is the first step to ensuring adequate participation. The next step is to market the program so students, parents, teachers, administrators, coaches, and other staff are supportive. Also, looking at costs to determine a break-even point can be helpful. By calculating a break-even point, you will have a fair idea of how many meals must be served to ensure a successful program.

TEACHERS AND COACHES

Teachers are important supporters to have on your side when implementing a successful School Breakfast Program. Teachers fulfill multiple roles within the school environment. They are not only educators of America's youth, but they also serve as role models for the students. Teachers should support the School Breakfast Program because it helps them prepare their students to learn and succeed. Studies have indicated that when children start their day with breakfast, they derive numerous benefits including improved attention span, academic performance, and classroom behavior. In many schools that have implemented the School Breakfast Program, teachers have discovered that concerns are often easily addressed and the benefits of maintaining the program far outweigh the costs. When communicating with teachers, it is critical to emphasize that a thoughtfully implemented breakfast program can be of great assistance in furthering their mission to make a difference in their students' lives every school day. If you are attempting to generate support for an alternative serving method, make sure you also highlight the short amount of time it takes for students to eat breakfast as well as your plan for food safety and the handling of trash disposal.

Physical education teachers and coaches in particular play an important role in a student's academic experience, and can also benefit directly from the presence of the School Breakfast Program. Without proper training, student athletes will lack the skills and endurance needed to excel. Similarly, without proper nutrition, student athletes lack the energy to perform at their peak levels during practice and competition.

When considering how to establish or expand a school breakfast program, an educator or coach may be concerned about:

Teacher Workload

Teachers do many things besides teaching to support a successful learning environment. Studies show that school breakfast has a clear and direct impact on learning. Make sure you emphasize that any additional work is handled by school food service staff, janitorial staff or the students themselves. Breakfast adds little or no work to the teaching day, and can even serve as an opportunity to provide a valuable nutrition education lesson!

Classroom Order

When breakfast is served in the classroom or brought to class in grab and go bags, food service staff provide trash receptacles, paper towels and other cleaning supplies for students to use.

Students clean up after themselves after eating their nutritious meal and are more ready to learn in the morning. Thoughtful planning of the menu and serving methods can limit both work and clean up time for everyone.

Time Commitment

Studies have shown that breakfast is often consumed very quickly. No matter which serving method is selected, breakfast can take as little as a few minutes (Grab 'n Go or Breakfast in the Classroom) or as long as the time available (Traditional Breakfast or Breakfast on the Bus). Present breakfast as a very small investment of time that provides a very large return, both to students and to educators.

Curriculum Opportunities

Teachers can choose to integrate school breakfast and nutrition education into their curriculum. These lessons may cover many related topics: how to maintain a balanced, healthy diet, where our food comes from, or nutritional sciences. For examples of nutrition education resources that might help teachers on this point, visit [USDA's Team Nutrition website](#). School breakfast can alternatively be used as a springboard for basic lessons in math, English, or other non-nutrition related topics.

Strong Minds, Strong Bodies

Eating breakfast every day not only develops a positive healthy habit in students and student athletes; it also prepares their bodies for optimum performance. Studies have shown that attentiveness and cognitive functions improve when children have eaten breakfast. The boost that breakfast provides in terms of energy, attentiveness, and cognition in turn boosts the ability to succeed athletically.

A Performance Edge

Coaches and physical education teachers know that academic performance is just as important as the ability to perform on the field, court or gymnasium. In most schools, an athlete must be a successful student to compete on school teams. Schools often have strict criteria for student athletes, such as attendance standards or grade point average minimums. Coaches must be concerned about their athletes' academic success as much as their athletic abilities.

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Parents are in many ways the most important decision makers in the school environment. Their primary concern is that your school is providing the best possible educational experience for their children. However, parents are also busier than ever with work and other responsibilities outside the home. Sometimes, the A.M. rush becomes so busy that there is no time for a healthy breakfast, or children refuse to eat right when they get up. As a result, some children arrive at school unprepared to learn. One way to increase the chances that these students have a successful day at school and help parents at the same time is to operate a convenient School Breakfast Program. Parents can use this option to guarantee that their children start their school day with a healthy, well balanced meal.

When communicating with parents, emphasize the many benefits that the School Breakfast Program provides not only to their children, but also to them. When students eat breakfast at school, then a parent's morning becomes a little bit simpler, and they can be secure in the knowledge that their children ate something healthy at the start of the day. Some students are also more likely to eat later in the morning, and depending on how your school breakfast program is/will be structured, those preferences may be accommodated as well.

When considering how to establish or expand a school breakfast program, a parent or guardian may be concerned about many issues. Here are some key issues for them to consider:

Child Already Eats at Home

It is wonderful if a family has time to eat breakfast together, but if not (or if children eat breakfast on the run), it may not be as much or as wholesome as parents would like. Further, if children have a long bus ride, they may be hungry by the time the bus arrives at school. Whether or not a parent has time to feed their children at home, the School Breakfast Program ensures a healthy option is always available.

Parent Role

Mornings can be really hectic! School breakfast is an option when family schedules are rushed or a child is unable to eat early in the morning. Parents can ensure their children are fed before school by using the School Breakfast Program. Furthermore, parents should ideally be included when choosing breakfast serving methods, and can also serve as a valuable resource in menu planning. Make sure that the parents in your community have a voice in the decision making process---when you do this, they are more likely to send their children for breakfast at school.

Cost

Breakfast at school is affordable. A full, healthy breakfast costs less than convenience store items. Furthermore, if a student qualifies for free or reduced price school lunches, they automatically qualify for free or reduced price meals in the breakfast program, with no additional paperwork. Payment is based upon parent income and is confidential. However, even for children who pay for their meals, the cost is typically \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day. Nowhere else will you find such a healthy and cost effective breakfast option.

Lack of Time

Time is an issue for many people, especially parents. Suggest to parents that a great way to increase the amount of time in their day and to ease worries is to send their children to school for breakfast. Also, children may find themselves waking up late for school and skipping breakfast altogether because they are racing to the bus stop or to school. By providing breakfast as an option for students, they will be able to have a healthy and nutritious meal before the start of their day, even if it didn't start out as planned.

Child Not Hungry

It's very likely that the issue in some households is that children are not hungry at the time when breakfast is served at home. Children may have different hunger cycles, so they may not be ready to eat breakfast when parents are. Some of these children go to school and are ready to eat either when they arrive or after 1st period. Offering flexible breakfast options not only satisfies their hunger but helps students focus during the morning school hours.

Breakfast Alternatives

Children, just like adults, base their food choices on what is available. They may make unhealthy choices if convenience stores or vending machines are the most accessible options. Convenience stores and fast food locations are similar in providing high calorie choices. Take the time to compare and contrast---school breakfast is a value for parents and students alike, while providing ample servings of fruit and whole grains. What a value!

Breakfast as a Social Experience

The School Breakfast Program offers an opportunity for students to eat with their siblings and classmates in a non-threatening environment, be it a cafeteria, gymnasium, schoolyard, or

classroom. This time for socialization allows children to children to learn from one another and build bonds. Students are usually eager to arrive at school to meet with their friends. Breakfast can be a time for them to do so without interruption.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Local community organizations and individual concerned citizens may express interest in the availability of breakfast programs at school. These might include child welfare groups, representatives from the business community, and organizations that combat hunger in your area. If you are exploring establishment or expansion of a breakfast program, making a public announcement may draw support or resources from this corner. As such, input from the community can be highly valuable.

When considering how to establish or expand a school breakfast program, a community organization or concerned citizen may have questions or concerns about:

Cost

It is important to emphasize that the School Breakfast Program is funded primarily through sales revenues and Federal (and possibly even State) reimbursements. The program should ideally cover its own costs and operate using sustainable business practices. As such, there should be no added cost to the local citizen when a school adds breakfast to its meal service.

Positive Impacts

As stated previously, eating breakfast can translate into better attentiveness, more energy, and higher academic achievement. In the long run, these benefits can have a tremendously positive impact on the community at large. Higher academic performance can raise the profile of local schools, and in the longer term, students who perform well in school are likely to become positive additions to the workforce. Providing breakfast at school also serves to alleviate child hunger, and helps to reduce the burdens of a community's needier households.

Business Opportunities

Though the school food service operation is non-profit and receives Federal reimbursement dollars; labor, food, and supplies are regularly sourced from the private sector. As such, adding or expanding a breakfast program can mean jobs and sales within the community, especially so

if you plan on procuring locally. If your school or district is located within a rural area, adding breakfast service may create new opportunities to collaborate with local farmers---you may even wish to use it as a springboard for establishing a Farm to School program! Details at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool>