

Chapter 19: School Breakfast Programs

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Background

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally-assisted meal program which is operated in public and private nonprofit schools as well as residential child care institutions (RCCIs). Due to a joint resolution passed by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1992, all public schools in South Carolina are required to offer the SBP. South Carolina schools and RCCIs provide a nutritious breakfast for approximately 260,000 students in South Carolina each day.

The SBP began as a pilot project in 1966 and was made permanent in 1975. It operates in the same manner as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). School Food Authorities (SFAs) that participate in the SBP receive reimbursement for each meal served. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet federal requirements and offer free and reduced-price breakfasts to eligible children.

Benefits of School Breakfast

Students perform better when their day begins with breakfast. Research has proven the importance of providing nutritious meals in the morning to students. Breakfast gives students the opportunity to perform their best. The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) as identified ways school breakfast benefits students:

1. Helps Improve Student Academic Performance and Behavior
2. Improves Children's Dietary Intake
3. Decreases the Risk of Food Insecurity
4. May Protect Against Childhood Obesity
5. Protects Against Other Negative Health Outcomes

Additional information is located in the Breakfast Research section of this chapter.

Breakfast Requirements and Policies

Meal Requirements

School breakfasts must meet the USDA's dietary specifications (nutrition standards). The dietary specifications address calories (minimum and maximum levels), saturated fats (less than 10 percent of calories), and sodium; and require that all Nutrition Facts labels and manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fats per serving for all food products and ingredients used to prepare school meals. See Chapter 19 – Menu Planning Basics of the *Program Reference Manual* for menu planning guidelines and requirements. Local SFAs and schools are responsible for determining the menus, the specific food items served and how they are prepared.

Meal Charges and Reimbursements

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the SBP. SFAs may charge no more than 30 cents for a reduced-price breakfast. SFAs set their own prices for breakfasts served to students who pay the full meal price, although they must operate their food service as a non-profit program. See Chapter 7 – Meal Pricing for additional information and guidance on

establishing meal prices for students in the paid category and for adult meals. Most of the support provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to SFAs in the SBP comes in the form of cash reimbursement for each breakfast served. The reimbursement rates are established annually by USDA and are distributed following their release by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to all SFAs in South Carolina. They are available at any time by calling the Office of Health and Nutrition, SCDE at (803) 734-8188.

Serving Breakfast in Alternative Schools

Alternative schools are often considered to be a “program” of another school, rather than a separate school. When a SFA indicates that an alternative school operates as a program of another school, breakfast does not have to be served at the alternative site as long as the students have access to breakfast at the related, “home” school.

Each student may only be claimed once per meal for reimbursement; either at the “home” school or at the alternative school. SFAs should be consistent in how each student is claimed.

Offering Breakfast for Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten Children

Preschoolers and pre-kindergarten students may participate in the SBP. However, if these students do not have access to the regular meal programs, federal regulations allow SFAs to participate in the Special Milk Program in addition to the NSLP and SBP in order to provide them with milk. Refer to Chapter 29 – Other Food Service Related Programs in the *Program Reference Manual* for additional information on the Special Milk Program.

Serving Times for School Breakfasts

Breakfast is to be served before 10:00 AM, or close to the beginning of the child’s school day. Bus routes need to be coordinated with school start times to be certain that breakfast is available to students who ride the bus, as well as to other students. The serving time for breakfast may be altered as needed from one school to another within the same SFA and from one class to another within the same school.

Location of Breakfast Serving and Dining Areas

The school may determine the most appropriate method of dispensing breakfast. It may be served in the cafeteria, in the classroom or from a central area in the school from a portable service area. Regardless of the location of the breakfast service, there must be point-of-service accountability and consideration of the need for disposal of waste products.

Length of Time for Breakfast Service

The length of service will depend on the menu, the number of students to be served and the location of service (for example, the classroom versus the cafeteria). All students must have sufficient time to eat their breakfast meal. It is recommended the district’s Local School Wellness Policy refer to the meal service times for schools. Refer to Chapter 6 – Meal Service Policies in the *Program Reference Manual* for additional information on service times.

Breakfast When School Starts Late

Schools should offer breakfast on days with late buses or late starts when it will be two hours or more from the time of the students’ arrival until all students have been served lunch. Some

students may have had longer bus rides and upset schedules that prevented them from having breakfast at home. Students should be informed about breakfast procedures on late-start days. The school breakfast menu must still meet program requirements. However, it may be simplified (for example, cereal/crackers, juice/fruit and milk) to facilitate quick, easy service.

Severe Need Breakfast

USDA provides additional reimbursement to schools determined to be in “severe need” based on high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits. The additional reimbursement is to allow those schools serving many low-income students to provide a more substantial breakfast than is required.

To be eligible, existing schools must have served at least 40 percent of lunches free or reduced-price in the second preceding school year. Existing schools will automatically receive the additional reimbursement via the South Carolina Automated Payment System (SCAPS). New schools should contact the Office of Health and Nutrition, SCDE at (803) 734-8188 to find out whether or not they are eligible. Eligibility to participate in the Severe Need Breakfast (SNB) is determined on a school by school basis.

Breakfast Research

A number of studies have reported students are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast.

- Researchers at Harvard Medical/Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston reported that hungry children are more likely to have behavioral and academic problems than children who get enough to eat. At school, hungry children had more problems with irritability, anxiety and aggression, as well as more absences and tardiness. (*Pediatrics*, January, 1998; *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, February, 1998)
- A Tufts University Statement in 1998 titled *The Link between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children* states: “Recent research provides compelling evidence that under-nutrition impacts the behavior of children, their school performance and their overall cognitive development.”
- The *Minnesota Breakfast Study* found that students who ate breakfast before starting school had a general increase in math grades and reading scores, increased student attention, reduced nurse visits and improved student behaviors. (December, 1997)
- USDA’s *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study* (1993) showed that School Breakfast Program meals are nutritionally superior in many key nutrients to other breakfasts, including breakfasts at home.

- A 1989 study published in the *American Journal of Diseases of Children* reported that “participation in the School Breakfast Program is associated with significant improvements in academic functioning among low-income elementary school children.”

Marketing the SBP

To increase participation in the SBP, consider marketing the program. Marketing includes promoting, advertising, and merchandising breakfast products. It involves the following activities:

- Determining what the customer wants and needs.
- Providing products or services that meet those wants and needs.
- Informing the customer that the products and services are available and of the benefits to be gained by using them.
- Selling the products at prices the customer considers being fair.

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) has identified barriers to SBP participation and strategies to increase student participation in the School Breakfast Program:

Barrier 1: Perception that school breakfast is only for free and reduced-price students

- Make a brochure or flyer for parents and students that can be handed out at orientation.
- Promote breakfast over PA, school radio station, or web site.
- Put a short announcement on the school’s answering machine.
- Send press releases to local newspapers or community newsletters.
- Advertise school breakfast in programs for football games, plays, band concerts, etc.
- Ask journalism students to make a video promoting school breakfast.

Barrier 2: Negative Child Nutrition Program image

- Survey students about their food preferences.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Invite parents to school for breakfast.
- Enlist the support of teachers.
- Give out free samples of school breakfast items at lunch or during break times.

Barrier 3: Lack of time to enjoy breakfast

- Use a different form of service. Example: hallway vendor cart for a quick-stop breakfast.

- Allow students to eat in the classroom.
- Serve breakfast on the bus.
- Offer breakfast later in the morning.
- Use two serving lines or self-service stations.

Promotion Ideas

Below are a few ideas from ICN to promote the SBP.

- Teddy Bear Breakfast – Ask students to bring their favorite stuffed bear to breakfast. Offer teddy bear shaped graham crackers on the menu and give students a picture of a bear to color.
- Pajama Party – Ask students and staff to wear pajamas to school. Award prizes to the students and staff members with the most colorful, silliest, or warmest pajamas.
- Sports Day – Ask students to wear something with their favorite team’s logo. Invite local sports personalities to have breakfast with the students.
- Cereal Box Contest – Ask the cafeteria staff to come up with a silly name for a new cereal. Invite students to enter a contest to design the cereal box. Ask high school art students to judge the boxes. Award small prizes to all contestants and a grand prize to the winner.
- Backwards Day – Serve breakfast for lunch and lunch for breakfast (but be sure to observe the meal pattern for the true meal time). Encourage students and staff to wear their clothes backwards.
- Story Time – Invite the librarian to read a book at breakfast. Choose a story with a food theme like *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss. Try to serve the same food item for breakfast.
- Advertise new food items before serving them for breakfast with posters and “teaser” signs.
- Wear a costume and hand out free samples.
- Make the cafeteria the “place to be” in the mornings.
- Use decorations to give the cafeteria a fun and exciting atmosphere.
- Obtain promotional material from outside sources or use artwork created by the students.
- Show videos or play popular music, being certain that either is age- or content-appropriate.

Other Resources:

Child Obesity 180 – Utilizes leaders from various backgrounds to help address the national epidemic. Started in Tufts University, the idea has enabled them to provide a wealth of resources, publications, etc. [Link to Child Obesity Website Food Research and Action Center](#) – A leading national nonprofit organization striving to end hunger within our country; the website provides great resources and tools.

<http://frac.org/>

Other Alternative Breakfast Models

Breakfast in the Classroom

Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) can help improve your breakfast program, increase participation, and make school breakfast more accessible to students. BIC has proven to be successful in starting a student's day with a nutritious meal. See Form 24-A, [Breakfast in the Classroom Checklist for Teachers](#) provided at the end of this chapter of the *Program Reference Manual* for a sample checklist for teachers that can be used or adapted for use.

Grab and Go

Grab and Go serving is a convenient and quick way for students to their first meal of the day. Grab and Go carts can be located in areas throughout the school, such as the near the school entrance or the hallways. Grab and Go breakfasts are a useful way to reach hungry kids in a hurry and boost participation.

Second Chance Breakfast

Second Chance breakfast offers a 'breakfast break in the morning, often after first period for older students in secondary schools. Second Chance Breakfast allow students who are late for various reasons to have a chance to eat breakfast.

Helpful Resources:

How School Breakfast Benefits Kids | Center for Best Practices

[Link to No Kid Hungry Best Practices for Breakfast](#)

Student Activities for Breakfast Time

[Link to Breakfast in the Classroom Toolkit](#)

Form 19-A
Breakfast in the Classroom Checklist for Teachers

Directions: School Food Authorities (SFAs) must ensure Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) is implemented accurately. This checklist was created to assist teachers and child nutrition staff ensure USDA requirements are met. This form may be completed daily, weekly, or monthly. File the completed forms for audit and review purposes. Answer each section. Detail any corrective action in the comments section.

Date: _____ **School Name:** _____

Teacher Name: _____ **Classroom Number:** _____

Program Requirements			
	Yes	No	N/A
1. Complete Meals Served:			
a. Delivery contains all required food items in sufficient quantities (i.e. two types of milk, grain, fruit or vegetable)?			
b. All 3 food components are served to each student in order to be counted and claimed?			
Comments:			
2. Point-of-Service:			
a. Students are served all of the required components prior to being counted on the meal count roster (i.e. milk, grain, fruit or vegetable)?			
b. Student's name is checked off meal count roster after verifying that all 3 components are received by student?			
c. Students who do not receive a complete meal are not counted on meal count rosters?			
d. Daily attendance is not used as meal counts?			
Comments:			
4. Safety and Sanitation:			
a. Good hygiene and sanitation practices are implemented?			
Comments:			

Signature _____

Date _____