

School Breakfast Models



Each breakfast model has its advantages and challenges. Depending on your school's facilities and current rate of breakfast participation, you can explore which model will be the best fit to help you meet your goals. The models below are listed in order of participation rates, with the first model typically reaching the fewest students, and the last model reaching the most.

TRADITIONAL BREAKFAST

In a traditional breakfast program, meals are provided to students in the cafeteria before the start of the school day. Students select their breakfast from a serving line before checking out at the register. In that sense, traditional breakfast closely resembles school lunch. It has the benefit of providing menu planners with a good deal of flexibility: breakfasts may be served either hot or cold, and there are no special packaging considerations for any of the food items because students consume their meals in the cafeteria. Traditional breakfast service also allows for the Offer vs. Serve option during which students choose three out of four breakfast items, creating less waste and a lower per meal food cost. Lastly, eating in the cafeteria makes it easy to dispose of trash.

However, traditional breakfast is often inconvenient for many students who would benefit from participating. Students may arrive late, leaving too little time to eat in the cafeteria. Other students may not be hungry that early in the morning. While other students may feel eating breakfast singles them out or perpetuates stigma. Lastly, some students would simply prefer to play outside with their friends rather than come in for breakfast. Schools are advised to carefully consider the accessibility of their program if they are exclusively using a traditional model.

SECOND CHANCE BREAKFAST

In this model, students eat breakfast during a break in the morning, making it beneficial for those who arrive late to school or are not hungry when they first arrive. Similar to traditional breakfast, Second Chance Breakfast is often offered in the cafeteria. Some schools choose to offer Second Chance Breakfast in paper bags at a kiosk, or serve Second Chance Breakfast in the classroom between periods. Allowing students to eat school breakfast between classes provides them with a healthy well-balanced option. Extra trash cans in heavy traffic areas helps to ensure that trash is discarded properly. This model might be more easily implemented for higher grades where students are more independent or have passing time between classes.

GRAB & GO BREAKFAST

Grab & Go describes a system in which breakfasts are packaged in paper bags, boxes, or trays for students to pick up and eat elsewhere. The key advantage of Grab & Go compared with other models is the flexibility in service time and location. Depending on school policy, students may be able to eat their breakfast in a number of different locations including in a classroom, cafeteria, the hall in between classes, or a combination of all of these. Allowing kids to eat on their own terms ensures they are eating when they have time and are hungry, and will likely mean more students eating school breakfast.

Grab & Go does come with a few logistical caveats. First, cold meals are typically easier to manage in a Grab & Go model, although hot items often appeal more to kids and are great to include when possible. Keep in mind that packaging costs may be higher. Schools also need to decide where the Point of Sale will be, and may consider using mobile carts, kiosks, or tables located in high traffic areas. Students are responsible for following the school's guidelines as to where and when they can eat and cleaning up after themselves.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

In this service model, students eat at their desks at the beginning of the day or during a morning break. Breakfasts can be served either hot or cold depending on the school's facilities. BIC can be offered in several ways:

- Staff can deliver breakfast to the classroom
- Student representatives can go to the cafeteria to retrieve breakfast for their class.

Breakfast only takes 10 to 15 minutes for students to eat, and teachers often find that students are more productive later in the morning after enjoying a healthy breakfast. This model is undoubtedly the most accessible for students, allowing your school to reach its highest possible participation, and also provides nutrition closer to instruction time, which has been shown to improve academic performance. Breakfast items may be more limited than one may find in a traditional breakfast and the cost of packaging and labor should be kept in mind.