

Wellness Principle: Healthy Food at School

Promising Practice: Breakfast in the Classroom

Aim: Offering breakfast in the classroom makes the morning meal accessible to all students. It ensures all students have the opportunity to start the day with the nutrients and energy they need to learn better, behave better and perform better in school. Numerous studies show it that eating a nutritious breakfast is critical to a student's ability to learn, stay healthy and behave in school.

Breakfast in the Classroom

Getting Started How To's :

1. What is *Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)*?

- ❖ Breakfast in the Classroom is a serving model in which students eat their morning meal in the classroom, usually during homeroom.
- ❖ At the beginning of each school day all students are offered the opportunity to eat breakfast in their classroom -- at "**No Charge**" -- regardless of family income.
- ❖ Student participation is optional. However, only breakfast provided by the school is allowed. (No food from home may be eaten in the classroom during breakfast.)
- ❖ Breakfast in the Classroom ensures that students do not need to arrive early in order to have something to eat.

2. How It Works – Generally

- ❖ The food service department prepares simple yet healthy menu items and puts the food in plastic tubs for each classroom.
- ❖ Each classroom assigns students to collect the BIC breakfast tubs from the cafeteria at the morning bell.
- ❖ In the classroom, students pick up their food items and a paper napkin. On a BIC meal roster, the teacher marks the students who took a reimbursable breakfast. All students who want breakfast receive the meal at "No Charge."
- ❖ Students eat at their desk, using their napkin as a place mat, while the teacher takes attendance and does other morning activities.
- ❖ After 10-15 minutes, students clean up their desk and put the trash into a plastic trash bag (that comes in the tub). The bag is then put into the plastic tub and is set outside the classroom to be picked up by custodial or food service staff.
- ❖ Food service personnel collect classroom BIC rosters and tally breakfast counts by the eligibility category of the students (paid, reduced price, or

free). A very important point to remember is that even though students eat at “No Charge”, the breakfast meals are not all claimed as “free” breakfasts, but are claimed in the eligibility category of the student who received the reimbursable breakfast meal.

3. What are the Benefits of *Breakfast in the Classroom*?

- ❖ **Teachers** report that serving breakfast in the classroom actually saves time. Instead of arriving late to class when coming from the cafeteria, students tend to come on time to get their breakfast.
- ❖ **Principals** also find that more time is spent on learning when students have eaten since there are fewer disruptions from students misbehaving or requesting to see the nurse for a hunger-related headache or stomach ache.
- ❖ **Food service directors** that serve breakfast in this manner acknowledge that they benefit financially from the program, as breakfast participation increases significantly once it is moved into the classroom.
- ❖ **For students**, the benefits of eating breakfast at school are well documented and include:
 - Improvements to math and reading achievement, performance on standardized tests, and vocabulary;
 - Improvements to concentration, alertness, comprehension, and memory;
 - Reduced absenteeism and school nurse visits;
 - Reduced obesity and improved eating habits, including increased consumption of fruit, milk and a wider variety of foods; and
 - Improved behavior, decreased tardiness and fewer referrals to the disciplinary office.

4. What Can Teachers Do?

- ❖ Request and express support for *Breakfast in the Classroom*. Talk to your school and district nutrition staff to learn more about the program.
- ❖ Let students know that school breakfast is for everyone, and encourage them to take advantage of it.
- ❖ Promote school breakfast to students as a "tool" that can help them learn.
- ❖ If school breakfast isn't served in your school, create a dialogue about starting a program with the administration and school nutrition services. Download the [Child Nutrition Fact Sheet: Breakfast for Learning](#) that summarizes key research findings connecting breakfast and academic performance, and share it with the

Keys to Success: Teachers who are now doing **BIC** are the strongest advocates of the program. They see the benefits of well-fed students and improved academic and classroom behavior. If your school serves breakfast, but only in the cafeteria, generate a dialogue with the school nutrition director about expanding breakfast service outside the cafeteria.

More Information: [Breakfast in the Classroom](#)
[Oregon Department of Education: Breakfast in the Classroom](#)

References: Nutrition Education's [Breakfast at School:Fast and Healthy Food for Thought](#)
Action for Healthy Kids: Game On: [Breakfast in the Classroom Challenge](#)