

# SCHOOL BREAKFAST BASICS

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally assisted meal program that operates in public and private nonprofit schools and residential child care institutions. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible

for reduced price meals.



## NEED

- There is a significant disparity in participation rates at breakfast compared to participation rates at lunch, especially for low-income students.
- Not all students eat breakfast at home.
  - Students may not be hungry first thing in the morning.
  - Students and families may lack of time to eat in the morning.
- Middle school and high school students are less likely to eat breakfast than elementary school students.
- Only 35% of parents of children ages 6 to 11 report eating breakfast each day with their children (*US Census Bureau*).
- Only 22% of parents of middle- and high- school- aged students report eating breakfast daily with their children (*US Census Bureau*).
  - More than twice as many parents report eating dinner with their children each day

## BENEFITS

Numerous studies looking at the impact of school breakfast demonstrate that school breakfast:

- Enhances academic performance.
  - Children score higher on certain tests including memory recall, reading and math.
- Improves student behavior.
  - Children aren't as restless.
  - Fewer discipline problems in the schools.
- Improves the learning environment.
  - Children are absent less frequently.
  - Children are tardy less frequently.
- Improves the quality of children's diets.

- Increased consumption of fruit and milk.
- Increased intake of vitamin C, vitamin A and calcium.
- Increased variety of foods eaten.

## PARTICIPATION

- In Maryland, only 44 eligible low-income children participated in school breakfast for every 100 who participated in school lunch during the 2007-2008 school year.
  - This figure varies widely by county.
- Nationally, only 46 eligible low-income children participated in school breakfast for every 100 who participated in school lunch during the 2007-2008 school year.

## ELIGIBILITY

- All children at participating schools are able to purchase a meal as part of the School Breakfast Program.
- A child whose household income is less than 130% of the poverty level is eligible for free breakfasts (<\$27,560 for a family of 4 in 2008).
- A child whose household income is between 130% and 185% of the poverty level is eligible for reduced-price breakfasts (<\$39,220 for a family of 4 in 2008).

## REIMBURSEMENT AND FUNDING

- The Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture funds the program nationally.
- In Maryland, the School Breakfast Program is administered through the State Department of Education.
- For the 2007-2008 school year, each meal served as part of the School Breakfast Program was reimbursed as follows:

**Reimbursement Rate for the School Breakfast Program (2007-2008)**

	<b>Non-Severe Need School</b>	<b>Severe Need School</b>	<b>Price of Meals to Children</b>
<b>Free</b>	\$1.35	\$1.61	\$0
<b>Reduced price</b>	\$1.05	\$1.31	\$0.30 (Maximum)
<b>Paid</b>	\$0.24	\$0.24	Varies

- Schools with greater than 40% of their students purchasing free or reduced price lunches qualify as severe need. An additional \$0.26 for each free and reduced price breakfast is reimbursed.

## NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Breakfasts offered as part of the School Breakfast Program must meet dietary guidelines.
  - Breakfasts must contain  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a child's daily requirement for calories, protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C.
  - No more than 30% of calories can come from fat and 10% of calories as saturated fat.
- Generally, breakfasts contain a serving of milk, fruit or fruit juice, and 2 servings from the grains or meat/meat alternate group (or 1 serving from each).

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- Lack of sufficient time allowed for eating breakfast prior to the start of the school day.
- Tight bus schedules that eliminate or limit time that students have to eat breakfast at school.
- Student preference to be outside of the building with friends instead of inside eating breakfast before the start of the school day.
- Stigma felt by students.

## STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST EXPANSION

- Alternative service methods to traditional breakfast consumed in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day:
  - **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Breakfast delivered to the classroom and consumed in the classroom setting before school or during 1<sup>st</sup> period.
  - **Grab and Go Breakfast:** Breakfasts packaged in bags with all components of the meal available at sites throughout school for pick up on the go, before school or during 1<sup>st</sup> period and consumed in the classroom, hallway, or other venue.
  - **Breakfast After 1<sup>st</sup> Period:** Breakfast served/consumed after the 1<sup>st</sup> period between classes (and finished during 2<sup>nd</sup> period) or during their break.
- Other options:
  - Pursue aggressive outreach and extend meal times.
  - Eliminate the reduced price meal category.
  - Offer universal free breakfast to students.

The districts that structure breakfast as a part of the school day (such as serving breakfast in the classroom) have the highest participation rates. The top performing districts in the country, serving more than 90 low-income students breakfast for every 100 that receive lunch, features programs in which students receive breakfast at no charge and alternative service methods that make breakfast an essential part of the school day.