

GOING FURTHER

Elimination of Reduced Price Breakfast

How does the elimination of reduced price breakfast work?

By eliminating reduced price breakfasts, schools offer their students two prices for breakfast – free and full price. In this model, students who would qualify for the reduced price meal are able to receive their breakfast for free. The school serves reimbursable breakfasts as it normally does. The only difference is that breakfast is offered at no charge to students who qualify for reduced price meals as well as those who qualify for free meals. Even though the school only uses two categories for charging students, the school still claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student. Schools that eliminate reduced price breakfasts often see an increase in participation in the lunch program as well as in their breakfast program. By saving money at breakfast, a student is more likely to have extra money to buy lunch. Schools find that participation, and as a result, federal reimbursements, increase enough to cover the cost of serving breakfast to this group of students for free.

Why Eliminate Reduced Price Breakfasts?

Offering breakfast for free to students that qualify for reduced price meals removes any financial barrier that these students may experience. Typically students who qualify for reduced price meals still have to pay a certain amount for school breakfast and lunch. In a low-income family, these expenses may add up and become prohibitive. When you eliminate reduced price breakfasts more students participate.

When Does Eliminating Reduced Price Breakfasts Work Best?

Eliminating reduced price breakfasts works well in schools with a high percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced price meals, but have low participation of reduced price qualifying students in the breakfast program.

EXAMPLE

School System: **Washington County**

Grades served: **Pre-K – 12th**

Enrollment: **21,269 Students**

Free/Reduced: **41.2%**



Washington County has eliminated the reduced price meal category and serves breakfast for free to all students whose family income falls under 185 percent of the federal poverty level. A few years ago, Washington County noticed a significant participation difference in breakfast participation in the reduced price category for students at MMFA schools vs. non-MMFA schools. This resulted in the decision to eliminate the reduced-price category mid-school year of 2002-2003. The increase in participation yielded an additional \$27,600 in federal subsidy that school year. Prior to eliminating this category during the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 12 percent of those students ate breakfast. During the 2007-2008 school year 28 percent of these students were now eating breakfast. For additional information, please contact the Food and Nutrition Services department of Washington County Schools.

Universal Free Breakfast

How does universal free breakfast work?

Breakfast is available at no charge to all students, regardless of their household income. Universal free breakfast is usually offered at schools that have a high percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced price meals. Because students do not need to bring cash, tickets or cards, universal free breakfast works well with the breakfast in the classroom model. However, it also works with other meal service options. Breakfast is given free to any student who wants it that day; however, the school claims the federal reimbursement at the correct income category for that student. This data is obtained from their meal applications or Direct Certification lists.

While schools are concerned about the financial loss covering for paid students, many schools find that offering universal free breakfast increases participation so drastically that they do not actually experience a loss and benefit from economies of scale. Some schools combine Universal free breakfast with Provision 2 or 3, which decreases the paperwork involved with offering breakfast in schools. For more information on Provision 2 and related requirements, please go to http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/prov-1-2-3/Prov1_2_3_FactSheet.htm.

Why serve universal free breakfast?

Universal free breakfast reduces the stigma attached to eating breakfast at school. It makes breakfast available to those students who may not want to participate in the program for fear of being labeled “poor.” It also removes a financial barrier to those who cannot afford the cost of a school breakfast.

When does universal free breakfast work best?

Universal free breakfast works well in schools where 70-75% or more of its students are eligible for free and reduced price meals. However, schools with fewer eligible students have operated the program successfully.

EXAMPLE

School System: **Baltimore City Public Schools**
Grades Served: **Pre-K – 12th**
Enrollment: **83,529 students**
Free/Reduced: **72.4%**

The logo consists of two stacked rectangular boxes. The top box is yellow with the words "GREAT KIDS" in a black, serif font. The bottom box is light blue with the words "GREAT SCHOOLS" in a black, serif font.

The Baltimore City Public School System offers free breakfast to all of its students—regardless of income. For additional information on implementing Provision 2, please contact the Food Service department of Baltimore City Public Schools.

Outreach to Middle and High School Students

Unlike elementary school children, middle and high school students have more autonomy and freedom to purchase food from local corner stores and fast food restaurants each morning before arriving to school. Additionally, middle school and high school students often do not feel hungry when they first arrive at school and are more apt to feel stigma associated with school meals. Due to these factors, schools need to work extra hard to compete for older students' business. Below are some concrete suggestions to reach this challenging audience.

Get Students Involved

- Create a school breakfast advisory group. Ask the group to research student perceptions of school breakfast and the barriers to eating at school. Request that the group propose solutions and help the food service staff and school administrators implement changes.
- Have students design and administer promotional activities, posters, slogans and broadcast announcements.
- Hold taste tests for students and have them vote on their favorite breakfast items. Add these foods to the menu.
- Ask student club advisors and sports team coaches to hold their meetings in the cafeteria during breakfast if that is where it is served.
- Solicit stores or vendors to donate prizes for a monthly raffle. Allow school students to administer the raffle.

Make Breakfast More Convenient

- Institute grab and go breakfast by placing breakfast carts around the school where students hang out.
- Keep the cafeteria open later in the school day so that students who arrive later or have morning free periods can eat breakfast.