



*Increase the funds available for your
school meal program by...*

Improving Participation in Your School Meal Programs

Breakfast

1. Breakfast in the classroom in elementary schools

Schools that have switched to breakfast in the classroom see participation increasing to 60-100% of students. Breakfast becomes part of the school day and students who participate do not feel stigmatized.

There are many options to bring breakfast to the classroom:

- Students can pick up their brown bag breakfast and carry it to the classroom
- Deliver breakfasts to classroom in coolers or have students pick them up
- Place breakfast components on a cart and allow students to help themselves outside each classroom

2. Breakfast at snack time in elementary schools

Increases participation by providing for students who have difficulty getting to school early, eat an inadequate breakfast at home, or who do not get hungry until later in the morning. School breakfast can be offered any time during the morning.

- Schools can offer breakfast both before school and at snack time, giving students a choice
- Alleviates the problem of children who forget their snack or students bringing in poor quality snacks
- Significantly reduces the number of students complaining of illness in the midmorning due to hunger

3. Offer breakfast after first class for middle and high school students

- Keep cafeteria open or offer breakfast at convenient kiosks
- Offer Grab N' Go breakfast items that contain the necessary 3 meal components for reimbursable meal

4. Offer breakfast free of charge to all students

- Schools offering free breakfast have increased participation for all students
- School with over 60% free/reduced find it is cost effective to provide free breakfast
- Provision 2 allows for a reduction in paperwork when all breakfast is free

Lunch

1. ChoicesChoices....Choices.....

- **Allowing children to choose between several entrée options, and vegetable or fruit choices will increase participation**
- **Change options often**

2. Reduce/eliminate foods that compete with the federal program

For every meal/snack that a student chooses that is not reimbursable you lose the federal reimbursement plus the state supplement (5 cents) plus the commodity reimbursement (17 cents).

- **Ask the school to disallow all foods outside the federal programs: including fundraisers that sell food, vending machines, snack sales, a la carte, etc.**
- **Minimize sale of a la carte foods by pricing them such that they are more expensive than a reimbursable meal, don't advertise the competitive foods, and set up the line to encourage students to take a reimbursable meal**

3. Make meal program easily accessible

- **Provide enough time for students to eat**
- **In larger schools create several access points for meals, like kiosks, cafés, etc.**
- **Offer meals that are reimbursable in a single menu item – preferably easy to hold**
- **Offer Grab 'N Go meals like pizza, sandwiches, tacos, yogurt/granola/fruit parfaits**

4. Marketing

- **Encourage new students to try the school meals by giveaways, promotions, etc.**
- **Create a pleasant and fun atmosphere**
- **Distribute restaurant style menus on school web site, in cafeteria, send home, etc.**
- **Make food attractive**

5. Involve students and parents

- **Engage students about the menu options, taste tests, and environmental aspects of the program (compost, disposables, etc.)**
- **Keep parents informed about the meal program (by web or newsletters), invite them to participate and ask their help in introducing new foods (hold taste tests, introduce local products with their own recipes, etc.)**