

# HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

*fuel for success!*



Healthy Kids. Healthy Communities. Healthy Rhode Island.  
Niños Saludables. Comunidades Saludables. Un Rhode Island Saludable.



## School Breakfast Expansion Toolkit



**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

September, 2020

“

*We need to take a whole-child approach to serving and educating our young people, because the fact is, students cannot perform at their best in the classroom if they aren't feeling their best. This includes a healthy breakfast, which schools can ensure is accessible by using innovative models so that all students are nourished and ready to learn each day.*

”

**Angélica Infante-Green**

*Rhode Island Commissioner of Education*



# School Breakfast Expansion Toolkit

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# I. MAKING THE CASE

## School Breakfast = Big Impact



All kids deserve a healthy start, as well as a healthy future, and schools play a critical role in providing an environment for them to learn, grow and thrive. The simple act of feeding kids a healthy school breakfast can generate positive, large-scale outcomes in education, health and economics. Healthier kids contribute to healthier communities. But school breakfast programs remain underutilized and many students lack access to something so simple yet so important for them to fully reach their potential.

This Toolkit will help Rhode Island schools consider innovative ways to reimagine breakfast by adjusting service models and better engaging with stakeholders so more students can start their day of learning with the fuel of good nutrition.

## School Breakfast Program Basics

The [National School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#) is one of the nutrition programs administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the federal level and the RI Department of Education Child Nutrition Program (RIDE CNP) at the state level. [Rhode Island General Law \(RIGL 16-8-10.1\)](#) requires breakfast programs be available for all students in all public schools. School districts/schools (referred to as School Food Authorities (SFAs) for administration of federal meal programs) manage the SBP at the local level and receive [per meal federal reimbursements](#), dependent on whether a student is qualified as full pay or eligible for a free or reduced price meal. SFAs operate as nonprofit food service programs with budgets that are separate from the school/district's general education fund.

Breakfasts must meet the [meal pattern and standards of the USDA](#) based on the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These standards were strengthened as part of the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#), and include fruits (or vegetables), whole grains and/or meats/meat alternates, and milk. Breakfasts are also limited in sodium, calories and saturated fats. Trans fats are limited to only those naturally present in some meats and dairy products.

The SBP, established by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, has grown over the past 50 plus years to serve millions of children breakfast in school. But many more children start the school day without a nutritious morning meal. Rhode Island Kids Count tracks school breakfast participation in their annual Factbook. The [2019 RI School Breakfast Participation Data](#) is compelling. Rhode Island ranks 33rd in the US for participation in the School Breakfast Program.

Learn about the history of the School Breakfast Program in a [FRAC \(Food Research & Action Center\)](#) blog post [Celebrating the History of School Breakfast: The Beginning](#).

Learn more about regulations, funding and oversight of federal school meals programs with [How School Meals Reach Kids](#), a [No Kid Hungry](#) graphic and Q&A.

## Federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

The CEP allows schools and districts with 40% or more students identified as low-income (e.g., enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or at-risk (i.e., homeless or in foster care) to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students and may offer higher reimbursements.

Schools must use data referred to above, combined with meal participation rates of free/reduced/paid students to assess whether the CEP is beneficial to them.

Schools may find CEP advantageous as demographics change, so regular review and analysis of the data is recommended



## Benefits of Breakfast: What the Research Shows

We all know the importance of eating breakfast for one's mental and physical health, and research on school breakfast has shown what teachers, administrators, school food service staff, families, and advocates see every day in our schools - students are more likely to go to school and be better students when they start the school day with breakfast.

Participation in the School Breakfast Program is a win-win situation for everyone. Studies have shown the connection of school breakfast to numerous academic and mental/physical health outcomes. School breakfast has also been shown to protect against childhood obesity. Participation in school breakfast is associated with a lower body mass index and lowers the probability of a student becoming overweight and obese<sup>10-13</sup>.



### Student participation in the School Breakfast Program can lead to:

#### Increased

##### ACADEMIC BENEFITS

Attendance<sup>1,2</sup>

Improved classroom behavior & academic performance<sup>1,2</sup>

##### HEALTH BENEFITS

Breakfast consumption<sup>6</sup>

Overall dietary Intake<sup>8</sup>

#### Decreased

##### ACADEMIC BENEFITS

Absenteeism & tardiness<sup>1,2</sup>

Disciplinary office referrals<sup>3</sup>

##### HEALTH BENEFITS

Breakfast skipping<sup>6</sup>

Hyperactivity, anxiety & depression<sup>4,5</sup>

Hunger & food insecurity<sup>7</sup>

Visits to the nurse<sup>9</sup>

Body Mass Index<sup>10-13</sup>

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For additional RI data on obesity and national research resources on the benefits of school breakfast:

Rhode Island Kids Count research brief:

- [Childhood Overweight and Obesity: Updated Data for Rhode Island \(May 2020\)](#)

FRAC (Food Research & Action Center) research briefs:

- [The Connections Between Food Insecurity, the Federal Nutrition Programs, and Student Behavior](#)
- [Breakfast for Learning Fact Sheet](#)
- [Breakfast for Health Fact Sheet](#)

## Hunger in Rhode Island: School Breakfast Can Help

Ensuring equitable access for all students to school breakfast has many proven benefits, but it is especially important for children who struggle with hunger and its devastating impacts. Hunger and food insecurity are linked to serious physical, behavioral, social and cognitive difficulties in children. The USDA defines food insecurity as the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Between 2016 and 2018, 11.0% of Rhode Island households were food insecure.

Federal meal programs, including the School Breakfast Program (SBP), play a key role in alleviating food insecurity, improving dietary intake, and supporting the well-being and academic achievement of children.

Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook/Economic Well-Being 2020

[Food Insecurity in Rhode Island](#)

No Kid Hungry Starts with Breakfast

[Ending Childhood Hunger: A Social Impact Analysis](#)

Rhode Island Kids Count Issue Brief June 2020

[Child Poverty in Rhode Island](#)

### Hunger's Impact on Students

"I can't remember the answer."

"Please don't call on me."

"My stomach hurts."

"I wish they would shut up."

"Can I go to the nurse?"

"Do you have a snack?"

"I just want to sleep."



### Benefits of School Breakfast

"I can help you."

"I know! Pick me!"

"I like yogurt the best."

"I feel strong and ready."

"Math is my favorite subject."

"I love coming to school."

"I love eating breakfast with my teacher."



## Rhode Island School Breakfast Participation

Participation in the School Breakfast Program is important – primarily as a way to help meet the nutritional needs of students and contribute to better academic outcomes, but also to help schools maximize federal reimbursements and operate a successful food service program. Breakfast participation in RI schools remains low, especially when compared to participation in the school lunch program.

Currently in Rhode Island, only **22%** of students enrolled in public schools access the School Breakfast Program.

Just **over two in four students** enrolled in RI public schools participate in the National School Lunch Program



But **fewer than one in four** students enrolled in RI public schools participate in the School Breakfast Program



- Rhode Island School Breakfast Program 2019 participation data (by school district, state aggregate, core cities, charter schools & state operated schools)  
[Children Participating in School Breakfast, RI Kids Count 2020 Factbook](#)
- RI Kids Count May 2019 Policy Brief (2018 participation data)  
[Access to School Breakfast: A Key Strategy for Improving Children's Health, Education, and Well-Being](#)

## WHY IS BREAKFAST PARTICIPATION SO LOW?

Lack of awareness about the School Breakfast Program and drawbacks of the traditional model of serving breakfast in the cafeteria before the start of the school day contribute to low participation. Using any number of creative and proven strategies can make breakfast more accessible and more appealing to students, whether served before or after the first bell or eaten in or outside of the cafeteria.



### LACK OF TIME

Students may be unable to get to school early; buses often don't arrive on time



### PERCEIVED STIGMA

Students may want to avoid the long-held stigma of eating in the cafeteria



### LACK OF HUNGER

Students may not be hungry before school, especially secondary students who often start school VERY early



### LOSS OF SOCIAL TIME

Students may choose socializing or playing over eating in the cafeteria, away from their friends

## II. MAKING IT HAPPEN

### Committing to Breakfast: The Team

It's easy to make a strong case for an improved school breakfast program after reviewing the research on the positive health and academic benefits for students, as well as the positive impact a successful program can have on the school meals budget. And after looking at Rhode Island's data on current school breakfast participation rates, and childhood hunger and obesity, it's clear that every RI community has a stake in improving access to healthy school breakfasts.

It's important to start any conversation or action about breakfast changes by engaging stakeholders critical to the success of the enhancement or expansion of the program. A successful breakfast program, whether enhancing a traditional cafeteria program or starting a new Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) model, requires buy-in and cooperation from the whole school community in order for it to be most successful. Conversations and decisions about an enhanced or new breakfast model best begin at the district level with the Superintendent and District Food Service Director. Interest from an informed and enthusiastic school committee member, building principal or classroom teacher can also help build momentum and support. Establishing a commitment for greater breakfast access from leadership, by reviewing the academic & health outcome research, budgetary impacts, and area school best practice models, is helpful before establishing school-based team(s). With a clear long-term goal in place to expand breakfast access, school-based teams can then be organized to review the unique challenges and opportunities of individual schools.

#### District Leadership

A district superintendent's (or designee's) support is critical to not only start but to maintain a new BAB program. Once district leadership is fully engaged, a collective vision can be established with the entire team and included in a District and/or School Improvement Plan or other similar strategic planning process to ensure such beneficial programs are evaluated and supported.



Consider a Targeted Universalism framework when thinking about school breakfast. Targeted Universalism is an

approach that simultaneously aims for a universal goal while also addressing disparities in opportunities among different groups.

A universal goal is for all children to start their school day with a healthy breakfast. Traditional breakfast in the café before school is impossible for many students who cannot arrive to school early, including some of the most needy students. By introducing a targeted approach, a new Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) program, the needs of these students are better met while simultaneously providing greater access and benefits to ALL kids.



## School Food Service

School Food Service, with expertise in food operations, supply chains, and meal service, will most effectively lead the efforts for a BAB program. They are responsible for adjusting kitchen operations to accommodate BAB, ordering additional equipment if needed, planning menus, training staff and students, and identifying funds for start-up materials. While food service may spearhead the effort, they need the cooperation of all stakeholders to make BAB a smooth, integrated part of the school day.

## Principals

Principals are key in ensuring the successful implementation of BAB. As the head of the school, the principal should lead the charge in communicating breakfast changes to school staff, students, and families, and allow them an opportunity to give feedback and make suggestions. People are much more willing to accept change if they feel that their opinions are heard and valued.

## Teachers

Most teachers find that they can easily incorporate Breakfast After the Bell (BAB), which often includes eating in the classroom, into their existing morning routines with some planning and flexibility. Alternative breakfast models should add little or no work to the teaching day. Any additional work involved in an alternative breakfast program can be handled by school food service staff, custodial staff or student helpers. In schools that have implemented a BAB program, teachers have found that most concerns can be addressed and that the benefits far outweigh any costs or disruptions.

## Custodians

Building cleanliness and waste management are important considerations when planning for an alternative breakfast model, so it's important to involve your custodial staff in the conversation from the start. Custodians can collect trash bins during the time that would have otherwise been spent cleaning the cafeteria. Collecting the trash quickly after the end of breakfast will ensure that classrooms are kept clean and pest-free.

## Families and Students

Students and their families are the customers of the school meals program. They decide whether to purchase and eat what's offered. Including both parent and student representatives (some who regularly participate in traditional breakfast and others who don't) on a BAB planning team can bring valuable perspectives and creative suggestions on what to serve and how to better organize and communicate a new BAB program.



Scheduling a training for all team members ensures everyone involved understands the procedures for a new Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) program. It's critical to provide USDA meal pattern and claiming training for anyone responsible for meal oversight at "point of service", including teachers involved in classroom breakfast.



Providence Public Schools

## Breakfast Program Assessment

District and individual school assessments should ideally be conducted in teams to best facilitate a conversation around a district goal/collective vision as well as to address unique school-based issues such as student population needs, schedules, space, equipment, communication channels and staffing. This will help determine which strategies are optimal for each individual school. The discussions and visioning of the district/school-based teams along with assessment observations and results will help focus all stakeholders on the best options to improve food access and expand participation in the breakfast programs.



Review school breakfast participation data to identify target schools with low participation.

### **BREAKFAST PROGRAM ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS TO ASK AND DISCUSS among stakeholders (District Administration, Food Service, building principals, teachers, school nurses):**

1. What is our collective vision or goal? (i.e. increase breakfast participation, offer every child a free breakfast, make it easier for kids to access breakfast, etc.)
2. What are our breakfast participation numbers as compared to lunch participation numbers? What is the discrepancy and how much room is there to increase breakfast numbers to at least match lunch numbers?
3. What are the current barriers in each school that prevent or discourage breakfast participation?
4. Are there opportunities to improve the breakfast in the cafeteria model to encourage more participation (better communication with families, more time for breakfast, improved signage in the cafeteria/around school to promote breakfast, etc.)?
5. Can we start or improve an existing alternative Breakfast After the Bell program (Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab & Go Breakfast, Second Chance Breakfast)?
6. What equipment and staff will we need to start or improve an existing Breakfast After the Bell program? Are there grants we can apply for to fund equipment needs?
7. Can we identify the best places for a Grab & Go cart for breakfast (at entrances, in hallways, in the cafeteria, etc) to ensure access for all students?

Schools may recognize the benefits of a Breakfast After the Bell program, which can significantly increase participation, but may need to take shorter-term steps to boost the cafeteria program while working towards a future Breakfast After the Bell goal. Or some schools may focus on making cafeteria breakfast more accessible by modifying the use of space, equipment, time, and staffing.



Teams can take a tour of current breakfast program(s) to talk with students, observe, and identify items or steps that can be improved

# Reimagining Cafeteria Breakfast

## BREAKFAST IN THE CAFETERIA



Traditional breakfast in the cafeteria before the start of the school day typically serves a limited number of students. But schools can encourage more students to eat by changing up menu options (with student input!), creating better signage and promotions, reimagining cafeteria space and acquiring new equipment.



**Woonsocket** District Administration and Sodexo made a commitment to better breakfast access for all students and completed an assessment to determine

the needs and feasibility to make it happen. With perseverance and the willingness to try new things, they ended up with a hybrid model that meets the unique needs of each of their schools. Some elementary schools implemented Breakfast in the Classroom. The Middle Schools brought in mobile carts with POS (point of service) tablets in hallways to serve Grab & Go meals. But other elementary schools improved the function of their cafeteria by using two mobile carts right inside the café door to create multiple serving lines with grab & go options that allow more kids to quickly get a meal and eat before the start of school in the cafeteria or after first bell in the classroom.



**Chariho** Public Schools and Chartwells teamed up with New England Dairy to pilot a new milk program

to increase participation in meals and consumption of milk while decreasing both milk and carton waste. Chariho High School said goodbye to standard milk cartons and welcomed two stainless steel dispensers into the cafeteria that keep milk icy cold and are more appealing to students. Promotional banners, decals and signage featuring whimsical black & white cow spots bring visual awareness and excitement to the new dispensers.



**Central Falls** Chartwells chef entices high school students to the cafeteria for breakfast with a custom Omelet Station. Since every omelet is “made to order”, it’s a special offering that has a big following! The

principal is so happy to see students taking advantage of breakfast that he gives extra time to students already in the cafeteria (after the bell rings) to order and eat. And as more students make their way to the cafeteria on popular Omelet Station days, they’re establishing the habit of eating school breakfast. In addition, a mobile cart is located at the front entrance to allow students entering to get a grab & go breakfast. Cooperation between school administration and food service, along with chef-made food promotions, have helped increase participation by 40% (90% of kids are now eating!) at Central Falls High School.



## Breakfast After the Bell: Incorporating Breakfast into the School Day

Offering alternative breakfast options AFTER THE BELL, incorporated into the school day, is a great way to increase breakfast participation and ensure that more students have a healthy start to the school day. These alternative service models make breakfast participation convenient by serving it at times and in places where students can easily access the meal – at the start of the instructional day in classrooms, served from hallway carts, or during a mid-morning break in the cafeteria. Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) is generally structured in one of three ways, or a hybrid version, depending on a school's preference and capabilities. Schools should evaluate all model approaches to determine which one (or combination) would be the best fit, with consideration of space, kitchen and serving equipment and logistics and staffing needs.



### BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

Students eat together in the classroom at the start of the school day, after the morning bell. Breakfasts are delivered by students or staff to classrooms from the cafeteria via coolers or insulated rolling bags and students eat while teachers take attendance, collect homework or teach short lesson plans so no instructional time is lost.



### GRAB & GO BREAKFAST

Conveniently packaged breakfasts are available to students from mobile carts located in high traffic locations such as school entrances, hallways or outside of the cafeteria. Students can eat in their classroom or in a common area before and after the bell has rung. Strategically placed trash cans allow students to eat when and where they can, within school guidelines.



### SECOND CHANCE BREAKFAST

Students eat breakfast during a break in the morning, often between first and second period or midway between breakfast and lunch. Schools can serve breakfast using a Grab & Go model, or they can open the cafeteria to serve breakfast during the break. Second Chance Breakfast can be effective for middle or high school students who may not be hungry first thing in the morning.



# Alternative Breakfast Models

## BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL

	Breakfast in the Classroom	Grab & Go Breakfast	Second Chance Breakfast
When	After the 1st bell, usually during the first 10-15 minutes of class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BEFORE the 1<sup>st</sup> bell <b>OR</b></li> <li>AFTER the 1<sup>st</sup> bell, during nutrition break or passing period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> period or following homeroom during passing period (optimally scheduled two hours before lunch)</li> </ul>
Service Location	Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serving cart(s) and/or reimbursable meal vending machines in high foot-traffic areas (e.g. hallways, bus drop-off, school entrances)</li> <li>Serving cart(s) in cafeteria to open up more serving lines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cafeteria OR</li> <li>Cart(s) or reimbursable meal vending machines in high foot-traffic areas (e.g. hallways)</li> </ul>
Dining Location	Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the way to class</li> <li>In a classroom</li> <li>In designated eating areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the way to class</li> <li>In a classroom</li> <li>In designated eating areas</li> </ul>
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food Service staff pack breakfasts in insulated containers</li> <li>Designated students bring containers to classrooms</li> <li>In 10 -15 minutes, students serve, eat, and clear breakfast</li> <li>During breakfast, teachers conduct morning activities and can integrate simple nutrition lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food Service staff pack breakfasts in bags or arrange items on service carts located strategically around campus</li> <li>Items are usually hand-held and portable (e.g., no utensils required)</li> <li>Point of Service (POS) systems often used to expediate service and ensure proper meal counting</li> </ul>	<p>Depending on service location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to traditional breakfast OR</li> <li>Similar to Grab n Go from cart(s) or reimbursable meal vending machines around campus</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually highest participation of all breakfast models (upwards of 70%)</li> <li>Decreases stigma</li> <li>Students serve and clear breakfast</li> <li>Teachers record which/how many students take reimbursable breakfast</li> <li>USDA meal pattern and claiming training requirement for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces stigma by moving breakfast out of the cafeteria</li> <li>Serves students who are short on time before school or between classes</li> <li>Helpful for schools with limited cafeteria serving/seating capacity</li> <li>Eliminates USDA meal pattern and claiming training requirement for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves students who can't get to school early due to bus or family schedules</li> <li>Serves students who are not hungry before school but are hungry before lunch and often visit the nurse with physical complaints</li> <li>Particularly helpful for schools with early start time and/or late lunch periods</li> </ul>
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from teachers, custodians, and administrators is essential</li> <li>Well suited for high free/reduced meal schools where all students eat free of charge</li> <li>More common in elementary schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>POS keypads connected to student accounts allow for smooth and efficient service, as well as for accurate reporting of claims</li> <li>Thoughtful waste management plan</li> <li>Adequate number of service cart(s) or reimbursable meal vending machines and effective placement</li> <li>Can be used effectively in elementary, middle and high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>POS keypads connected to student accounts allow for smooth and efficient service, as well as for accurate reporting of claims</li> <li>Bell schedule and school policy allows for mid-morning breakfast</li> <li>Thoughtful student supervision plan</li> <li>Adequate number/size of service and dining locations</li> <li>Most effective in secondary schools</li> </ul>

# Step by Step Guide for Starting a Successful BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL (BAB) Program

## ASSEMBLE TEAM

Identify school breakfast stakeholder representatives and assemble a **SCHOOL BREAKFAST TEAM** to include school food service staff, principal, teachers, custodians, school nurse, office staff, parent(s) and paraeducators. Getting key stakeholder representatives involved in the planning process will ensure better communication, stronger support and greater student participation for the new breakfast program.

**Keep all stakeholders updated on individual TASKS with a combination of in-person meetings, email communication and/or a shared google document.**



If there's initial resistance to a BAB program, consider a pilot with one classroom or a group of students to see what works and what might need further investigation.

## Long-term tasks prior to rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Review below resources

### All BAB programs:

- [No Kid Hungry Starts with Breakfast](#)
- [Pre-Implementation Checklist](#)
- [Innovative Breakfast Delivery Options](#)
- [Teacher Guide – Classroom Set Up and Clean Up](#)

### Grab & Go (G&G):

- [Grab & Go to the Classroom 101 Video](#)
- [Tips for Implementing an Effective Grab & Go Program](#)

### Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC):

- [Breakfast in the Classroom 101 Video](#)



If funding for needed equipment isn't available or shipment is delayed, consider renting, borrowing or reusing what's available in a creative way to stay on schedule for the start of a new BAB program.

**TEAM TASK:** Create long-term and short-term rollout timeline.

**TEAM TASK:** Seek input on the proposed menu from students and staff.

## School Food Service (SFS)

- Determine [equipment needs](#); apply for grants to fund breakfast equipment if necessary.
- Research and consider menu options that reflect student/teacher input, cultural preferences and existing, new and local supply chain availability.
- Finalize logistics for staffing, set up, schedule, and payment system.
- Connect with other BAB schools to visit and observe best practices. Include principals/teachers on visit if possible.

## Principal

- Ensure that information on the school breakfast program, including menu and price, is communicated and promoted (school website, printed menu, signage).

## Teachers

- Support student engagement on menu design (taste-tests, surveys, etc.).

## 6-8 weeks prior to rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Review rollout timeline progress.

**TEAM TASK:** Consider options for unopened, uneaten food-safe items (share table, return to food service, nurse's office, food pantry).

### School Food Service (SFS)

- Ensure all additional equipment has been procured.
- Confirm rollout timeline with principal.
- Meet with principal and custodians to discuss food pick up schedule, trash disposal areas, and breakfast delivery equipment storage area(s).

### Principal

- Inform office staff of rollout progress, including training date, and supply them with all necessary breakfast expansion information in order to field questions from staff, parents, and students.

### Teachers

- If students are eating in the classroom, determine which classroom activities will take place during this time, (e.g. collect homework, deliver announcements, classroom attendance, quiet reading, brief nutrition lesson, etc.).

### Custodians

- Determine new food pick up schedule, trash disposal areas.
- Set up option of professional pest control if needed for later on in the rollout process.

## 4 weeks prior to rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Consider leadership opportunities for student helpers:

- Pick up and return breakfast items from food service for their classrooms (BIC).
- Wipe off desks before and after breakfast.
- Collect and dispose of trash.

### School Food Service (SFS)

- Make cafeteria schedule revisions.
- Order any additional BAB supplies (trash bags, disinfectant wipes, etc.) that classrooms will need and establish a system for replenishing.
- Identify resources to use for training session (meal accountability, food safety, nutrition lessons, sample menu items, etc.)
- Coordinate with custodians on potential additional trash equipment/containers and their strategic placement.
- In coordination with principal, schedule training, including USDA meal pattern and claiming requirement, as needed, for:
  - Teachers
  - Custodians
  - Nurses
  - Paraeducators

## Principal

- Send BAB letter to parents providing all essential information about the program including new logistics, as well as the program benefits.
  - [G&G Customizable Letter to Families](#)
  - [BIC Customizable Letter to Families](#)
  - [SCB Customizable Letter to Families](#)
- Introduce BAB to students -explain new logistics, as well as program benefits.

## Teachers

- Discuss BAB with students and introduce the concept of student helpers.
- Identify student helpers and create student helper schedule
- Designate areas in classroom for trashcans and other BAB needs.

### 3 weeks prior to rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Food service/principal to conduct training for stakeholders (teachers, custodians, nurses, and paraeducators) to review rollout progress to answer any questions or address concerns.

#### School Food Service (SFS)

- Conduct training with all stakeholders.
- Obtain any incentives for student helpers.

#### Teachers

- Request student helper incentives (if any) from food service staff.
- Announce student helper schedule to class.

### 2 weeks prior to rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Plan and schedule a BAB practice run for new breakfast routine.

#### School Food Service (SFS)

- Ensure timeline is on track; adjust if necessary.
- Inventory equipment and supplies to be sure all are ready or will be delivered on time.
- Distribute cleaning supplies to classrooms and ensure teachers know the process for restocking.

#### Teachers

- Explain to students the new procedures and activities to do during breakfast to get them feeling comfortable with the new morning routine.

#### Custodians

- Ensure additional trash equipment/containers have been procured.
- Designate areas in school for trash containers and pick-up.
- Determine trash pick-up times and communicate the schedule/procedure with all other stakeholders.

## 1 week prior to rollout

### School Food Service (SFS)

- Execute practice run to identify and address any issues – coordinate with principal.
- Utilize social media channels for promotion (menu and program details).

### Principal

- Confer with food service for any last-minute updates.
- Remind parents via backpack flyer, phone, email and text messaging systems as well as school website and electronic signage.
- Execute practice run to identify and address any issues – coordinate with school food service staff, teachers and custodians.

### Teachers

- Ensure you have cleaning supplies (trash bags, wipes, sanitizer, etc) and know the process for restocking.
- Address any issues that arise during practice run with students, school food service staff or principal. Revise procedural routines accordingly.

### Custodians

- Address any issues that arise during practice run with teachers, school food service staff or principal.

## 1 day prior to rollout

### School Food Service (SFS)

- Ensure that all systems are go for rollout!

### Principal

- Remind students of the new breakfast program via morning announcements.
- Remind parents via flyers students can take home, or via phone/text messaging system.

### Teachers

- Remind students about new procedural routines and activities to do during breakfast.

## Week of Rollout: LAUNCH YOUR BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL PROGRAM!

### School Food Service (SFS)

- Make immediate adjustments to the program to troubleshoot issues.

### Principal

- Document what's working and what needs adjusting, including input from parents, nurses, paraeducators and office staff.

### Teachers

- Document what's working and what needs adjusting, including input from students.

### Custodians

- Document what's working and what needs adjusting.

## 1 week after rollout

**TEAM TASK:** Review input from stakeholders (school food service staff, principal, teachers, custodians, school nurse, office staff, parents, paraeducators and students) to assess the program and make necessary revisions. Remember – the first few days or weeks of a new breakfast program might have challenges but it will get easier over time.

## 1 month after rollout and beyond

**TEAM TASK:** Hold regular meetings/check-ins with the School Breakfast Team to assess G&G and/or BIC program. Track participation, absenteeism, tardiness and nurse visits as well as teacher observations on behavior and attention.

**TEAM TASK:** Consider using brief surveys at regular intervals with key stakeholders to assess the success of the program and troubleshoot any issues.

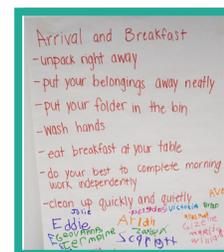
## Breakfast After the Bell Myths

### MYTH #1: It takes too much time away from instructional minutes.

! **FACT:** Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) need not diminish instructional time as it occurs at the beginning of the school day when routine daily activities usually happen, such as taking attendance, morning announcements or collecting homework. In fact, BAB often adds valuable teaching time, as students' brains get fueled and focused. Teachers can use the time to "check in" and address any issues that might disrupt ongoing teaching and learning throughout the day.



Develop a Classroom Agreement.



Hennessey Elementary School  
East Providence



Distribute Classroom Cleaning Supply Boxes



Woonsocket Public Schools

### MYTH #2: It creates a mess and more work for custodians.

! **FACT:** Breakfast After the Bell should not be messy! Students will become accustomed to the routine of eating breakfast in the classroom or on the go and cleaning up after themselves. Trash and recycling receptacles strategically placed around the school or outside of classrooms make disposal easy, and with proper direction and training for both staff and students, BAB becomes a smooth part of the morning. Set clear expectations and provide positive reinforcement!

**MYTH #3: It creates more work for teachers.**

- ! **FACT:** Breakfast After the Bell, if well-designed, should not require additional work for teachers, even if the BAB model is Breakfast in the Classroom. Students can volunteer for jobs with the BIC routine, such as picking up and returning breakfast items from food service, wiping off desks before and after breakfast, and disposing of trash, while teachers continue with their regular morning tasks.

**MYTH #4: Very few kids participate in Breakfast After the Bell because very few participate in cafeteria breakfast.**

- ! **FACT:** Breakfast After the Bell is actually a great way to dramatically increase breakfast participation! Traditional breakfast in the cafeteria has barriers for kids – they may not get to school early enough to eat breakfast in the cafeteria; they may prefer to use “breakfast” time to socialize with friends outside of the cafeteria; they may not be hungry first thing in the morning and would eat breakfast a little later. By offering breakfast at a more convenient time and place, schools can drive participation numbers up, which in turn means more revenue for the school meals budget.

**MYTH #5: The breakfast food is unhealthy.**

- ! **FACT:** All school breakfast programs - in the cafeteria, in the classroom, or Grab & Go - must meet the same federal and state nutrition standards. Expanding breakfast access with a Breakfast After the Bell program is an opportunity for students, teachers and families to work with food service staff to design a menu kids will eat.



Reimbursable vending machines are a unique option to improve breakfast access and boost participation.



Serving and promoting local fruits/veggies is always an appealing healthy option! Monitor local purchasing options for seasonal deals.



**MYTH #6: Starting a Breakfast After the Bell program is a lot of work.**

- ! **FACT:** Not if you form a team and follow the steps in our Step by Step Guide for Starting a Successful Breakfast After the Bell Program!

### III. MAKING IT SUSTAINABLE

A school breakfast program that ensures all students have equal access to a healthy start to the school day is a win for all! And by utilizing a Breakfast After the Bell model, schools are able to serve more students and reap many positive benefits. But once a school establishes a program, what can be done to assure its continued success?

#### Wellness Policy Language

Consider adding explicit language to your district/school wellness policy to address a Breakfast After the Bell program requirement. District/School wellness policies are required to detail standards and nutrition guidelines for meal programs, including breakfast. Referencing the benefits and commitment to alternative breakfast models raises the profile of these programs with all stakeholders and supports their continuity, even during administrative or food service staff changes or due to adjustments to school schedules.

Changes in staff and schedules are inevitable, but the written commitment to accessible breakfast programs will help ensure that awareness and discussion with all stakeholders is ongoing. District/School leadership and wellness committee membership should regularly review breakfast participation numbers, staff and student feedback, food service serving models and district/school student demographics to best understand the value of a fully accessible and maximized school breakfast program for optimal health and learning outcomes.

States and local school districts across the country have achieved great success sustaining alternative breakfast programs by enacting a range of policies. These policies can be structured in different ways. Some require all schools to implement a Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) model. Others target schools by grade level or level of need, based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Policies can incorporate funding to help schools comply with a requirement but many successful examples exist without this funding. For more on school breakfast policy, including examples of legislation, see [No Kid Hungry Breakfast After the Bell Policy Solutions From Across the US](#).



The Providence Public Schools wellness policy includes the

provision “To ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast, PPSD should arrange bus schedules or use other methods, including “breakfast after the bell” options, to serve school breakfasts that encourage wide participation.” as part of the section for School Meals.



#### Student & Staff Engagement

Don’t underestimate the value of connecting with students about the breakfast program on a regular basis. Students are the customers who ultimately decide if and what they eat. And food is only nutrition if it’s actually eaten! Getting input from a wide range of students (those who regularly eat and those who don’t) using opinion surveys, taste-tests and suggestion boxes lets them know their voice matters and goes a long way in creating a positive experience with the program. Their input is invaluable and can help tweak a program’s menu or service logistics to make it more enticing for students.

And the same goes for teachers and other school staff. Seek input from them as well! The more they are invested in the breakfast program, the more they will support it!



Getting middle and high school students to eat breakfast can be a challenge. Many youth aren't hungry after waking and arrive at school on an empty stomach, more interested in hanging out with friends than eating in the cafeteria. **East Greenwich** wanted to change that so the district wellness committee and Aramark Food

Service convened student food advisories and tried something new – breakfast smoothies! Sharing samples of some new flavors (think tropical escape and apple pie) and getting feedback from students while reminding them about the availability of grab & go breakfast items brought greater awareness to the program.



Before the student-led “Beat the Clock” program arrived at **Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center**, students had to trek over to the nearby high school building cafeteria so many were late to class or didn't eat breakfast at all. From this

problem, the idea for “Beat the Clock” was born. A few inventive students worked with a teacher and Sodexo Food Service to get a mobile breakfast cart set up at WACTC and promote the offerings and ease of access with their fellow students. Students advocated and made this a reality!



## Communication & Promotion

A (new) breakfast program can greatly benefit from a strong communication and promotion plan. Not only should one precede the start of a new program but communication and promotion has a bigger impact when it's ongoing. Remember that your school community stakeholders (students, parents/guardians/teachers) have busy schedules and a myriad of demands on their time and attention.

Make sure everyone is reminded of the benefits of school breakfast and receives updates on menu offerings and program logistics. Use multiple communication methods and channels such as website postings, newsletters, PA announcements, backpack flyers, social media, text messaging, and robocalls and use them regularly! And a simple but effective strategy is the “nudge”. Nudges are subtle acts of positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions offered by school staff (think principal, teacher, front office staff or even bus drivers!) or student leaders about breakfast.



**Cranston Public Schools' Food Service (Aramark)** does a great job using social media to inform their community and promote their meals program. Regular posts

on Facebook include photos of delicious and healthy offerings and provide helpful program info that's easy to access. A picture is worth a thousand words!

Parents, students and teachers quickly scrolling their newsfeed can be reminded of the variety of school meal offerings and program details to encourage participation in the program and make that participation easier.





Hennessey Elementary School in **East Providence** has made classroom breakfast a signature part of their “On time, Ready to Learn” motto. The entire staff is committed to classroom breakfast as it affords an early-morning student “check in” that allows for tighter instructional time for the rest of the day. They use a variety of creative ways to remind parents/ guardians of breakfast in the classroom including “Community Morning Meeting” (often takes place

outside with students, staff and parents/guardians who walk their children to this neighborhood school) and hall monitoring posts where all staff welcome students and give a “nudge” about breakfast. But their most successful tool is the ClassDojo app which is used for school-home communications. It can be customized for schoolwide or classroom applications and has a simple translation button allowing families to easily access content in 35 different languages.



Traditional methods of communication, such as printed (or even online) menus, no longer register with many busy and distracted students, especially teens. So savvy food service staff need creative ways to generate awareness of new and

exciting breakfast offerings at school. **North Providence** Public Schools’ Food Service (Chartwells) uses banner displays to capture the attention of its high school students for the smoothie and parfait offerings at breakfast. These well-designed and colorful banners are portable so can be set up in various locations in the building.



**Cumberland Public School’s** Food Service (Sodexo) keeps students up-to-date with their Clipper\_eatz (tying in the school mascot!) Instagram account. Posts are often colorful photos of school food offerings, as well as announcements, news, fun food facts and tips for eating healthy!



## V. RESOURCES

Building a better breakfast program using AFTER THE BELL models takes commitment, some planning and a bit of ingenuity. But there are many resources and best practice models to review and even some funding opportunities to explore.

### Organizations supporting schools starting alternative breakfast programs:

- [\*Action for Healthy Kids\*](#)
- [\*FRAC School Breakfast Program\*](#)
- [\*Meals4Kids\*](#)
- [\*No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices: School Breakfast\*](#)
- [\*Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom\*](#)
- [\*Project Bread\*](#)
- [\*USDA Food and Nutrition Service\*](#)

### Handouts

- [\*Best Practices To Operate Breakfast After The Bell Without Universal Free Meals\*](#) (No Kid Hungry)

### Grant funding for starting a Breakfast After the Bell program:

*Availability not guaranteed; review for eligibility and deadlines*

- [\*Action for Healthy Kids\*](#)
- [\*New England Dairy/Fuel Up to Play 60\*](#)
- [\*NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants\*](#) (contact RIDE for availability of funds)

### Toolkits from around the country:

- [\*Arizona Breakfast Toolkit\*](#)
- [\*FRAC Secondary School Principals' Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit\*](#)
- [\*Hunger Solutions New York: School Breakfast\*](#)
- [\*Massachusetts Meals4Kids Toolkit Series\*](#)
- [\*Rise and Shine Illinois: Breakfast After the Bell\*](#)
- [\*Serving up a Successful School Breakfast Program \(Wisconsin\)\*](#)

### COMMUNICATE to students, families and staff about your Breakfast After the Bell program

*Sample communications (in google docs) to copy to your own google drive OR download as a Word doc, and customize for your school*

### SURVEY stakeholders (teacher/families/students) to identify successes and challenges

Sample surveys (in google forms) to copy to your own google drive and customize for your school; after customizing, send to recipients through google for an online survey that will automatically record responses in a google sheet OR use a printed version of the survey

- [\*BAB Survey Template – For Teachers\*](#)
- [\*BAB Survey Template – For Families\*](#)
- [\*BAB Survey Template – For Students\*](#)

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Developed by RI Healthy Schools Coalition, in conjunction with the Rhode Island Department of Education. Many thanks to the resources listed above for information and inspiration.



**RIDE** Child  
Nutrition  
Programs

**RIHSC**  
Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition