

# Breakfast in the Classroom

QUICK GUIDE



**Part of the Massachusetts  
After the Bell Toolkit Series**

This resource is brought to you by the Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

# Preface

Approximately 1 in every 8 Massachusetts children is food-insecure.<sup>1</sup> While these children and their families may not be hungry today or even tomorrow, the threat of hunger is a daily reality in their households. Federal nutrition benefits are a critical safety net to help keep these families' budgets in balance and minimize trade-offs between food, housing, medical care, and other critical needs.

For children living in food-insecure households, eating a healthy breakfast at home is often not possible. The National School Breakfast Program (NSBP) is a federally-funded program that helps bridge this gap for families, providing nutritious meals at low or no cost to low-income students at schools throughout the country. According to the Food Research & Action Center's 2015-2016 School Breakfast Scorecard, of the more than 330,000 students in Massachusetts who qualify for free and reduced-price meals, only 49% are eating school breakfast. Starting the day with a nutritious meal is critical for every student—no matter their family's income level.

School breakfast champions here in Massachusetts are making great strides in increasing breakfast participation across the Commonwealth. Participation among students eligible for free or reduced-price meals rose by 15% from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year alone. Together, we can ensure that all students in the state have access to nutritious meals that help them learn and thrive.

<sup>1</sup> Feeding America, 2018

## About the Child Nutrition Outreach Program

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) works with local districts, schools, and communities across the state to increase participation in the National School Breakfast Program. Administered by Project Bread since 1994, CNOP provides technical assistance and innovative solutions to support schools implementing and expanding school breakfast programs. Together, we strive to ensure that all children in Massachusetts start the school day nourished and ready to learn.

This quick guide, presented by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread, is intended to assist school nutrition directors and other breakfast advocates in launching and implementing **Breakfast in the Classroom** in order to increase participation in school breakfast. The **BIC Quick Guide** is part of a series of quick guides designed to help with the implementation of alternative breakfast models including **Breakfast in the Classroom**, **Grab & Go**, and **Second Chance Breakfast**. View the entire series at [www.meals4kids.org/resources](http://www.meals4kids.org/resources).

For additional resources and technical support, please contact the CNOP team at [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org) or (617) 723-5000.

# Massachusetts School Breakfast Challenge

The Massachusetts School Breakfast Challenge partners are challenging schools to increase student participation in school breakfast by October 2020. Schools are encouraged to increase their breakfast participation to reach Challenge goals corresponding to the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Schools achieving these participation goals will be recognized and eligible for awards.

## challenge group 1

**Schools where 60% or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve an 80% or higher student participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for school breakfast after the bell and in the classroom.

## challenge group 2

**Schools where 30-59% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve a 50% or higher student participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for an alternative school breakfast after the bell model.

## challenge group 3

**Schools where 29% or less of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve a 25% or higher participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for an active school breakfast program.

Visit [www.maschoolbreakfast.org](http://www.maschoolbreakfast.org) for future announcements regarding breakfast trainings, funding, and networking opportunities.

# What is Breakfast in the Classroom?

In the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) service model, students eat at their desks at the beginning of the day or during a morning break. Breakfast can be served either hot or cold depending on the school's facilities. Service can either begin after the bell or before the bell continuing after the bell.

## BIC can be offered in several ways:

- Staff can deliver breakfast to the classroom.
- Student representatives can go to the cafeteria to retrieve breakfast for their class.
- Students can receive breakfast from staff off of a cart in the hallway and head into class.\*

\*See our Grab & Go guide for more information: [www.meals4kids/GnG](http://www.meals4kids/GnG).

Breakfast only takes 10 to 15 minutes for students to eat. Many teachers use this time to take attendance, collect homework, deliver announcements, or begin the day's instruction.<sup>2</sup> Often, they find that this is a valuable use of time and that students are more productive later in the morning after enjoying a healthy breakfast.

- 1** When students eat school breakfast in the classroom, it removes the stigma for students who qualify for "free" meals and normalizes eating breakfast at school, since everyone is eating. Students will not go hungry because they are too embarrassed to go to the cafeteria for school breakfast or because their bus was late.
- 2** BIC offers that all-important time for teachers to do a social-emotional check-in with their students while students develop interpersonal skills with their peers over breakfast.
- 3** BIC provides the opportunity for school nutrition programs to reach their highest possible school breakfast participation.
- 4** Providing nutrition closer to instruction time has been shown to improve academic performance.
- 5** Children who eat breakfast are more likely to arrive on time to school, retain what they learn, behave better, and experience better health outcomes.

## BIC BENEFITS

## Building a School Breakfast Coalition

Creating a coalition of supporters for BIC is the first step in successfully implementing a school breakfast change. Principals and superintendents are key champions as part of the coalition, but you should also consider the perspectives that teachers, custodians, school nurses, parents, and students themselves will offer in the planning process.

When presenting the plan to teachers, make sure you are listening to their concerns and presenting answers and solutions as part of their training. If you are able to involve other stakeholders in the planning process and incorporate ways to ease their concerns as well, you are less likely to face resistance down the road.

For further assistance with building your school breakfast coalition and communicating key messages to the various stakeholders, check out the resources accompanying this guide at [www.meals4kids.org/BIC](http://www.meals4kids.org/BIC).

# BIC Implementation Timeline

3-4 months  
prior to  
rollout

- Contact a member of the Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) team to set up a meeting by sending an email to [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org).
- Visit a successful Breakfast in the Classroom program at another school. Speak with the staff members there about the challenges they faced and how they overcame them.
- Present the case and initial plan to the principal and superintendent. Invite them to provide feedback and contribute to the plan.
- Determine any equipment needs (coolers, refrigerators, etc.) and apply for grants if necessary.

2-3 months  
prior to  
rollout

- Check in with the CNOP team to discuss any outstanding questions about BIC.
- Schedule a meeting with the principal, teachers, custodians, nurses, and school nutrition staff to discuss the model change.
- Meet with the custodial staff to discuss a waste removal plan.
- Schedule training meetings for teachers and school nutrition staff.
- Schedule an announcement at the next PTA-PTO meeting or Parent-Teacher Night.

4-6 weeks  
prior

- Order supplies for the classrooms (trash bags, additional waste bins, disinfectant wipes, etc.).
- Send a letter home to parents informing them about the new way breakfast is being served.
- Explain the model change to students.

2-3 weeks  
prior

- Finalize the waste removal plan with custodial staff.
- Conduct trainings for teachers and school nutrition staff regarding compliance concerns and meal counting. Try a practice run with teachers. Implement a monitoring system by appointing one member of the school nutrition team to serve as a liaison, exchanging feedback with teachers. Refer to ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook for more information.
- Train students on how the program will work. If students will pick up coolers from the cafeteria, come up with a rotating schedule for each class.

1 week  
prior

- Remind parents about the new BIC program through a flyer or the school's phone/texting system.
- Check in with teachers and staff to answer any outstanding questions.

1 day  
prior

- Remind the students about the change over the morning announcements.

1 week  
after  
rollout

- Continue to plan evaluation meetings with staff involved and make necessary changes to the program.

# How It

1

## PREP

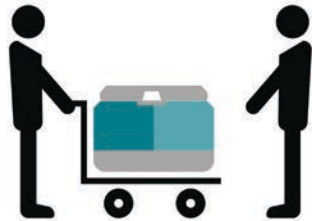
School nutrition staff pack milk and breakfast items in coolers for each classroom.



2

## DELIVER

School nutrition staff, teachers, or student ambassadors deliver breakfast to the classrooms.



3

## DISTRIBUTE

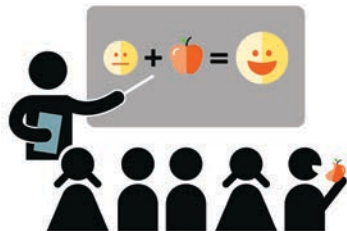
Teachers use a roster to check off the names of students who take a meal. This can be done in conjunction with taking attendance.



4

## TEACH

Teachers engage students in a lesson or activity while they enjoy their meal.



# Works

## 5 CLEAN UP

Teachers assist students in appropriately disposing of trash, partially-consumed food or milk, and all other waste. Students may also put any extra unopened food into a designated share bin for other students to eat throughout the day.



## 6 REMOVE TRASH

Teachers or student ambassadors place the trash in the hallway. Custodial staff will collect all trash during the first few periods of the day.



## 7 RETURN COOLERS

All items not taken by students must be returned with the cooler. Teachers or student ambassadors may return the coolers along with the breakfast rosters to the cafeteria once breakfast has ended.



## 8 RETURN TO LESSON

Students have a full belly and are now focused and ready to learn for the day!



# Healthy Menu Planning

Offering fresh, healthy BIC meals can seem logistically challenging. To assist you in offering the most nutritious breakfast options to your students, we have developed a one-week cycle menu that focuses on healthy breakfast options that can be used in alternative breakfast models. This cycle menu adheres to USDA regulations—promoting fresh fruit and whole grain-rich products—and offers recipes that students will want to eat.

We recognize that budgets vary across districts and factored total cost into our choices. We hope you will find this to be a useful guide for offering financially viable, healthy menu options for Breakfast in the Classroom.

## MONDAY

- Assorted Cereals (2 oz = 2G)
- **BONUS: Cheese Stick (1 oz = 1MA)**
- Banana (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## TUESDAY

- Breakfast Sandwich (2 oz = 2M/MA, 1-2 oz = 1-2G)
- Seasonal Fresh Fruit (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## WEDNESDAY

- Breakfast Bar / English Muffin (1 oz = 1G)\*
- Sunflower Seeds (1 oz = 1MA)
- Sliced Apple w/ Cinnamon (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## THURSDAY

- Whole Grain Pancakes (2.4 oz = 2G)
- **BONUS: Hard-boiled Egg (1 Medium Egg = 1MA)**
- Fruit Puree or Fresh Fruit (1 cup = 1F)
- **BONUS: Syrup (1oz PC)**
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## FRIDAY

- Granola (1/4 cup or 1 oz = 1G)
- Greek Yogurt (4 oz = 1MA)
- Raisins (1/2 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## ALTERNATIVE BREAKFAST MENU

\*Breakfast Bar oz eq will vary per product.

For more Breakfast in the Classroom sample menus, recipes, and product lists, please consult Project Bread's Let's Prepare Healthy School Breakfast toolkit:

[www.projectbread.org/healthymenus](http://www.projectbread.org/healthymenus).



# Community Profile

## Hoosac Valley Elementary School

For several years, Hoosac Valley Elementary School in Adams (formerly C.T. Plunkett Elementary) had been offering traditional breakfast in the cafeteria before school. In September 2016, thanks in large part to the hard work of School Nutrition Director Roseanne Schutz, Principal Michelle Colvin, and Superintendent Dr. Robert Putnam, the school began serving Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC).



Roseanne first met with the Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) in 2015 to discuss potential breakfast models, grant opportunities, and implementation strategies. After meeting with CNOP, Roseanne applied for a grant from the New England Dairy and Food Council. The school was awarded \$2,790, allowing them to purchase portable coolers to carry refrigerated breakfast items to all of the classrooms.



Before implementing BIC only 33% of students, or 146 students out of 441, were eating breakfast every day. Since making breakfast a part of the school day and moving it into the classroom, the number of students eating breakfast has climbed to 383 each day, or 90%. "Our school's nurse has seen a reduction in students coming to the office during the early hours of the school day complaining of stomachaches and headaches," said Principal Colvin. "The number of students arriving tardy to school has gone down, and many parents have made a point to share a 'thank you' for bringing free breakfast to their children."

# FAQs: BIC

**Q:** Teachers at my school are concerned that implementing BIC will increase their workload. How can I address their concerns?

---

**A:** During the implementation phase, teachers will spend a small amount of additional time introducing students to the new breakfast procedure. Teachers will have some new responsibilities—like counting the reimbursable meals—to ensure a successful program. Teachers often find, however, that this is time well spent since classroom management is often easier once BIC is underway. Many teachers report improvements to students' behavior, focus, and attention when they have enjoyed a healthy breakfast. To ease teachers' duties, you can bundle a reimbursable meal in a clear plastic bag or implement the serve-only method.

**Q:** Will serving breakfast in the classroom take away from learning time?

---

**A:** No. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) recognizes the advantages of breakfast on learning. In 2015, ESE issued policy guidance stating that serving breakfast in the classroom can be counted toward instructional time. Teachers can activate classroom time during breakfast by checking homework, integrating solo reading time, and beginning the day's learning.

**Q:** Will BIC lead to additional food waste?

---

**A:** No. One concern with serving breakfast in the classroom is that school nutrition staff will have fewer menu options that are portable and can be easily consumed at a desk. For this reason, CNOP has developed Let's Prepare Healthy School Breakfast, a toolkit complete with healthy breakfast recipes for schools serving breakfast using alternative models. When students are presented with diverse breakfast options and healthy, scratch-cooked meals, there will be less waste. Additionally, students can place any wrapped or whole food items they do not want to eat during breakfast in a "sharing bin" for other students in the class. "Sharing bins" must be approved by the local board of health. Refer to ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook to ensure compliance.

**Q:** Will BIC result in a messier classroom?

---

**A:** No. As long as you have established a trash removal plan with the students and custodial staff, BIC will not result in a messier classroom. Many schools choose to provide students with hand-held breakfast items that are easily eaten and produce little mess. By providing classrooms with placemats, wet wipes, and paper towels, teachers and students will be prepared in the event of a spill.

**Q:** Will trash removal become a burden on custodial staff?

---

**A:** No. Students can do the bulk of the cleaning up after breakfast is served in the classroom. All trash from breakfast should be placed in heavy-duty trash bags or rolling trash bins and left outside in the hallway for custodial staff to pick up within the first couple periods of the day. This is usually less work for custodians than the previous responsibility of cleaning the cafeteria after breakfast. Custodians should not need to spend extra time cleaning classrooms aside from their normal routines.

## Conclusion

We hope this quick guide will be a helpful ongoing resource to assist you in launching Breakfast in the Classroom. While the information and resources provided here will give you many of the tools you need, we know that operating a school breakfast program is a multi-faceted endeavor. CNOP can help! Our expertise gained from more than 20 years of experience can provide you with the guidance needed to increase participation in your program and overcome any challenges that you may encounter. Together, we can make sure all children in Massachusetts are prepared to succeed—starting with a healthy school breakfast.

Along with this quick guide, you can find a multitude of resources on our website that will help you implement Breakfast in the Classroom successfully: [www.meals4kids.org/BIC](http://www.meals4kids.org/BIC).



If you have any questions, or if you would like to speak with someone on the CNOP team regarding your breakfast program, contact us by email at [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org), or by phone at (617) 723-5000.

