

# BENEFITS OF BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL

School breakfast participation has the power to reduce absenteeism, increase test scores, and decrease childhood food insecurity.<sup>1,2</sup> Implementation of Breakfast After the Bell programs increases student participation in school breakfast, and encourages better academic and social outcomes overall.

## Why Breakfast After the Bell?

One of the best ways to increase participation in the National School Breakfast Program is to expand accessibility with a “Breakfast after the Bell” (BATB) program. The goal of BATB programs is to build an innovative breakfast service into the school day by making it readily available to students after the first bell rings, via an alternative breakfast model. BATB is particularly important for students that often miss breakfast before the bell because of barriers like transportation constraints, work schedules, and the stigma associated with arriving early for a school meal. The idea behind BATB is to increase access to breakfast by building it into a school’s time, culture, and campus. If more students can access breakfast, then participation will increase dramatically, and students will be better prepared for their academic school day.

For instance, MA State Representative Andy Vargas (D-3rd Essex), shared that one school in Haverhill saw its breakfast participation double, “from 42% to 85%, after it implemented Breakfast After the Bell” via a Breakfast in the Classroom model for all elementary school students.<sup>4</sup> Eating breakfast each morning is proven to increase academic achievement and lower absenteeism.<sup>1</sup> Access to breakfast overall reduces the likelihood of food insecurity by 15% in elementary school children.<sup>2</sup> When breakfast is offered after the bell, outside of the cafeteria via an alternative breakfast model, and free of charge for all students as it is this school year, the impact is greatest.

## Why Now?

As all school meals are free until June 30th, 2022, this year provides an exceptional opportunity to initiate or expand a BATB program. In discussions with almost 30 districts about the impact of COVID-19 on breakfast, CNOP learned that many are piloting newly modified breakfast service models to respond to the pandemic safety protocol changes or have expanded their existing BATB programs. By “piloting” or temporarily testing BATB models now, many schools have improved breakfast access and gained the support of school stakeholders. These pilot programs can help build a strong student, administrative, and staff following, or BATB coalition, which will help continue student participation into next year – even if Universal Free School Meals (USM) is not extended. For schools mandated to institute BATB in Fall 2022, it is the perfect time to build a supportive coalition and pilot your free BATB program.

## Massachusetts BATB Legislative Mandate

In 2020, House Bill 4218, “An Act Regarding Breakfast After the Bell,” was signed into law. It requires all schools with 60% or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (“mandated schools”) to implement a form of BATB programming by Fall 2022. To meet the requirements, a school’s breakfast service must be held “after the beginning of the instructional day has begun” and “be accessible by all students.” When considering how to implement a program, we encourage districts to tailor some of the “typical” alternative models (below) to the needs and restrictions of each school. Make the models your own to meet the needs of your student community.

## Common Alternative Breakfast Models

### BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM (BIC)

In this model, students typically are served breakfast while in their classrooms at the beginning of the day. Many teachers like to collect homework, read a book, or begin some light instruction during the 10-15 minutes while students are eating. Often this becomes a valuable use of time and community-building to start off the day. It is worth noting that time spent eating breakfast in the classroom can be counted towards instructional time.

- **Example:** Holyoke Public Schools provides BIC at all grade levels and reached 83% of the student population in 2021. The district maintains high participation by offering hot menu items and multiple options every day. When the district implemented BIC starting in 2016, Superintendent Anthony Soto was a BATB champion which in turn built a culture of health and breakfast into the greater district. BIC brings significant revenue back into their program, which provides additional funding to reinvest in the food service department.

### GRAB N GO BREAKFAST

This model allows students to pick up breakfast from serving carts or kiosks located in easily accessible locations in the school— at entrances or other high-traffic areas. Often, larger schools with many entrances implement Grab & Go to ensure that students coming from all forms of transportation can access breakfast on their direct route to the classroom. Students eat in the classroom, in the hallway, or even in the cafeteria after “grabbing” their breakfast.

- **Example:** Lowell High School engaged their students in implementing their Grab & Go breakfast program. The Food Service Department worked with a marketing class, which completed a traffic flow analysis to help implement an extensive and effective Grab & Go kiosk system. FNS placed kiosks in the high traffic areas with more streamlined Point of Sale systems. Students in every part of the building could pass a kiosk on their way to class, grab a quick breakfast, and eat in their first period classes.

### SECOND CHANCE BREAKFAST

This model provides a “second chance” for students to get breakfast by building in a scheduled time for breakfast after the school day has begun, usually served during a class break, or passing time. It is a flexible model that can be operated out of the cafeteria, at kiosks in the hallway, or in lobbies/multipurpose rooms. This model is typically used most at Middle, Intermediate or High Schools, where older students report not being hungry in the early morning.

- **Example:** North Attleboro High School started a second chance breakfast during COVID, and now has the highest breakfast participation in the district. Taking advantage of the fact that students were allowed to eat in their classrooms, the food service department worked with the principal to build in a “breakfast period” from 9:10-9:20 a.m. After homeroom, students grab breakfast from the cafeteria and go to their next class to eat it. It allows students to eat breakfast when they are hungry and helps build in a culture of participating in school breakfast that helps reduce stigma school wide.

## HYBRID BATB MODELS

Many schools see success by implementing a combination or modification of the above models to make BATB work best for their student body across different age groups, grades, and schedules.

- **Example:** The Gardner Pilot Academy in Boston Public Schools was facing challenges serving breakfast to their older 5th-8th grade students and their youngest Pre-K to Kindergarten students. To resolve this, the school implemented a Grab-n-Go cart at the entrance to the middle school on the 3rd floor for older students; and began a Breakfast in the Classroom feeding program for pre-K and kindergartners. Grades 1-5 funneled through the cafeteria as they arrived at school, and then had the opportunity to get a Second Chance Breakfast until 9:30 a.m. during their class break. Participation drastically increased when all student needs were met via alternative models.

## RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Team is here to help brainstorm, design, implement, and promote your BATB program. We offer technical assistance meetings, video calls and phone calls to troubleshoot and help work through any issues. Project Bread also offers grant funding opportunities to help start and/or maintain BATB programs. Additionally, we have many **printed and downloadable resources** to help promote your breakfast program to the school community, students and the administration. Reach out to [sharon\\_johnson@projectbread.org](mailto:sharon_johnson@projectbread.org) & [chloe\\_miller@projectbread.org](mailto:chloe_miller@projectbread.org) for Eastern MA and [clara\\_obstfeld@projectbread.org](mailto:clara_obstfeld@projectbread.org) for Central and Western MA, or visit our **Child Nutrition Program Resources** page to find out more about the specific services we offer.

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