



UNIVERSAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

Universal School Breakfast refers to a school program that offers breakfast at no charge to all students, regardless of income.

WHY HAVE UNIVERSAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST?

Many children do not eat a nutritious breakfast every morning.

- Many families are living on very tight budgets and can't afford to provide good breakfasts at home every day nor the money to buy them at school.
- Regardless of income, families today live busy lives, with long commutes and long and nontraditional work hours that often make it difficult to sit down long enough in the morning to eat a nutritious breakfast.

Universal School Breakfast increases student participation in breakfast.

- Many students who are eligible for free or reduced price school breakfast do not participate because they do not wish to identify themselves as low-income by eating school breakfast. Providing breakfast at no charge to all students helps remove the stigma for low-income children of participation in school breakfast.
- Only 44 children eat federally-funded free or reduced price school breakfasts for every 100 who receive free or reduced price school lunch. Studies show that Universal School Breakfast programs dramatically increase student participation in school breakfast.
- Some Universal School Breakfast programs provide breakfast in the classroom when school starts in the morning, rather than in the cafeteria before school starts, which makes it easier for children to participate.

Universal School Breakfast improves student achievement, diets and behavior.

- Studies conclude that students who eat school breakfast at the start of the school day show a general increase in math and reading scores as well as improvements in their speed and memory in cognitive tests.
- Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- Children who have school breakfast eat more fruit, drink more milk, and consume a wider variety of foods than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.
- Schools that provide breakfast in the classroom at no cost to all students report decreases in discipline and psychological problems, visits to school nurses and tardiness; increases in student attentiveness and attendance; and generally improved learning environments.



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HOW DO SCHOOLS START UNIVERSAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST?

- Provision 2 is a federal School Breakfast Program (and National School Lunch Program) option for schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs when they serve meals to all students at no charge. Schools should contact their State Agencies for assistance on implementing Universal School Breakfast through Provision 2.
- Some school districts that serve a large percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced school meals are finding that they can break even when they serve breakfast at no charge to all, even without adopting the Provision 2 option. The increased participation brings in a sufficient amount of revenue to cover the additional costs. The school districts in Columbus, Ohio, and Washington, DC, are recent examples.
- State legislation provides special state funding for Universal School Breakfast in four states. Illinois provides funding for a universal breakfast pilot program for schools with 80 percent or more free and reduced-price eligible students. Maryland allocated \$1.9 million for school year 2005-2006 for “Maryland Meals for Achievement”, an in-classroom universal free school breakfast program. Massachusetts provided \$2 million for fiscal year 2005 for universal breakfast, allocated for a reimbursement of \$0.24 per breakfast for any school offering universal breakfast if costs exceed other reimbursements. North Carolina allocated \$2.1 million for school year 2004-05 to provide free universal school breakfast to kindergarten students in districts where 50% or more of the kindergarten students are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.
- States also provide funding to support the School Breakfast program in general, which can provide larger benefits to schools that have larger participation rates. Some states provide additional funding for each breakfast served (California, Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin); some provide funding for breakfast start-up costs (California, Illinois, and Washington); and some provide additional incentive funds for increased participation in schools that serve high levels of free and reduced-price meals (Colorado, Connecticut, Missouri, and Ohio.)

What Teachers and Students Say About Universal Breakfast

Having breakfast at school every day helps me because I won't have to be hungry during language arts. – Maryland student

It is little to spend on long term results... It gives me time to visit with [my students]... It is a nice way to start the day nutritionally, socially, and emotionally. – Minnesota teacher