

# 10 Reasons to Try Breakfast in the Classroom

## 1. No child should start the school day hungry.

Studies show that children who skip breakfast are at an academic disadvantage: They have slower memory recall, make more errors, and are more likely to repeat a grade.<sup>i ii</sup>

## 2. Not all children are able to eat at home.

Whether they come from a family with a tight budget, are too busy, or simply have a poor appetite in the morning, not all children get the energy and nutrients they need to get a healthy start to the morning.

## 3. Your school has a breakfast program!

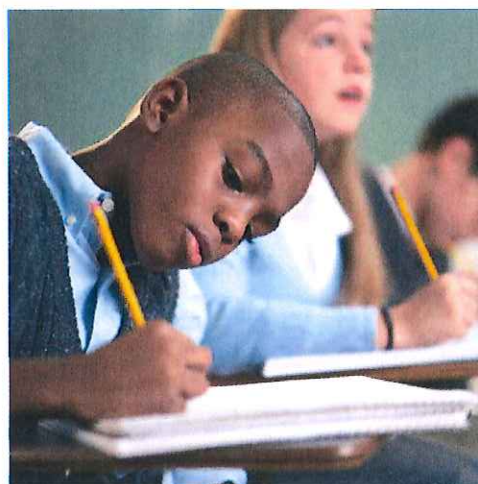
Every day, meals are available to students that meet USDA guidelines, which reflect the best nutritional science available. Every breakfast service includes offerings of fruit, whole grains, and low fat or fat free milk.

## 4. Breakfast in the classroom gets more students to participate.

Bus schedules, limited time, and class distance from the cafeteria are all barriers to participation in the school breakfast program. There is also sometimes a stigma associated with school breakfast. Having breakfast in the classroom eliminates many of these barriers and reduces stigma by enabling more students to participate in breakfast.

## 5. Breakfast in the classroom requires minimal work...

A well-planned breakfast program runs smoothly. The teacher's role can be as easy as checking names off a roster and placing trash outside the classroom, and custodians need only pick up bags when breakfast is over. School food service staff can prepare meals the day before. Breakfast can be eaten in 10-15 minutes alongside routine morning activities.



## 6. ... and can have great payoffs!

Studies show that eating breakfast can help math, reading, and standardized test scores.<sup>iii</sup> Breakfast also helps students pay better attention in class, perform problem-solving tasks, and improves memory. Serving breakfast in the classroom can help reduce tardiness and absences, and help children behave better.<sup>iv</sup>

## 7. Ensuring that students eat breakfast helps create healthy habits for life.

Children who eat breakfast tend to have more adequate nutrient intakes than those who don't.<sup>v</sup> Some studies have also indicated that eating breakfast on a regular basis reduces the risk of being overweight.<sup>vi</sup>

## 8. Breakfast can be incorporated into lesson plans.

For instance, for younger students, eating an apple sliced into four quarters might easily turn into a math lesson using fractions, a writing activity about the five senses, or a fun nutrition education activity. For older students, that same apple might spark a scientific inquiry about energy and calories or even plant lifecycles. The possibilities are endless.

## 9. Breakfast in the classroom allows teachers to spend time with students.

Breakfast can give you the opportunity to personally interact with students before delving into the rest of the day's activities. Or, you can take care of administrative tasks that often get postponed until the end of the day.

## 10. Students will thank you.

Whether through smiling faces or increased focus in class, their minds and bodies will be grateful. The goal of School Breakfast is to ensure that every child gets the boost they need for physical and academic well-being. See that your students take advantage of School Breakfast today!

<sup>i</sup> Wesnes KA, Pincock C, Richardson D, Helm G, Hails S. "Breakfast reduces declines in attention and memory over the morning in schoolchildren." *Appetite* 2003;41(3):329-31.

<sup>ii</sup> Benton D, Maconie A, Williams C The influence of the glycaemic load of breakfast on the behaviour of children in school. *Physiol Behav.* 2007 Nov 23;92(4):717-24. Epub 2007 May 31

<sup>iii</sup> Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, Adams J, Metz JLD Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2005 May;105(5):743-60

<sup>iv</sup> Alaimo K, Olson CM, Frongillo EA Jr. "Food Insufficiency and American School-Aged Children's Cognitive, Academic and Psychosocial Development." *Pediatrics* 2001; 108(1):44-53.

<sup>v</sup> Wilson NC, Parnell WR, Wohlers M, Shirley P. "Eating breakfast and its impact on children's daily diet." *Nutrition & Dietetics* 2006; 63:15-20.

<sup>vi</sup> Breakfast Eating and Weight Change in a 5-Year Prospective Analysis of Adolescents: Project EAT (Eating Among Teens) Maureen T. Timlin, Mark A. Pereira, Mary Story, and Dianne Neumark-Sztainer *Pediatrics* 2008; 121: e638-e645