

Breakfast in the Classroom Improves Child Health and Student Success

Children who eat breakfast are healthier and better prepared to learn

Research strongly links school breakfast with positive academic and health outcomes among school-aged children. Compared with children not participating in school breakfast, children who eat school breakfast have been shown to have:

- Improved test scores in math and reading^{i,i,ii,iii}
- Lower rates of absences and tardiness^{iv,v,vi}
- Better psychosocial functioning, including reduced behavior problems, anxiety, depression and hyperactivity^{vii}
- Improved dietary intake^{i,viii,ix,x,xi}
- Lower body mass index^{xii,xiii}
- Fewer visits to the school nurse^{xiv}

Schools and school districts have the opportunity to increase revenues through improved school breakfast programs

- Federal funding is available to provide breakfast for all students eligible for free and reduced meals.
- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows high poverty school and districts to provide breakfast and lunch to all students free of charge through federal reimbursements.
- By adopting CEP, schools and districts not only reduce administrative burdens, but also increase their ability to provide breakfast to students through alternative delivery models that provide students breakfast after the bell including Grab and Go and Breakfast in the Classroom.
- While transitioning breakfast out of the cafeteria to a model that serves more students often has initial implementation costs, many schools and districts are able to produce positive earnings by maximizing participation above 80 percent participation in school breakfast.

Providing Breakfast After the Bell in the Classroom (BIC) is a promotes breakfast participation

Breakfast in the Classroom (serving breakfast in the classroom as part of the school day) has been shown to be the most promising model for schools nation-wide in boosting participation in school breakfast. By moving breakfast after the bell and into the classroom, children are more likely to be well-nourished and ready for the rigors of an academic day. Nationally, schools providing universally free meals through BIC reach a 90 percent participation rate on

Children's HealthWatch and The Massachusetts Breakfast Report Card

Children's HealthWatch is a non-partisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy and child health experts committed to improving children's health in America. Every day, in urban hospitals across the country, we collect data on children ages zero to four. We analyze and release our findings to academics, legislators, and the public to inform public policies and practices that can give all children equal opportunities for healthy, successful lives.

The Massachusetts School Breakfast Report Card, which is scheduled to release in early 2017, outlines the health, academic, and socioemotional benefits of school breakfast participation for students in Massachusetts and describes the progress that school districts with high (>60%) and moderate (40-59%) rates of poverty across the Commonwealth have made to increase breakfast participation from 2013-2016. This inaugural report card for the state highlights successful models for promoting school breakfast including Breakfast in the Classroom and outlines opportunities for school districts across the state to increase participation, which may lead improved health and academic outcomes among school children.

For additional information about Children's; HealthWatch and the School Breakfast Report Card, please contact:

Allison Bovell, Research Policy and Communications Coordinator

Tel. (617) 41-3580 / Email: allison.bovell@bmc.org

ⁱ Education Week Research Center. Quality Counts Report. January 2016. Available at: http://www.edweek.org/media/qualitycounts2016_release.pdf

ⁱⁱ Basch, CE. Breakfast and the Achievement Gap Among Urban Minority Youth. *J Sch Health*, 2011; 81 (10):635-640

ⁱⁱⁱ Murphy JM, Pagano M, Bishop SJ. Impact of a Universally Free, In-Classroom School Breakfast Program on Achievement; Results from the Abell Foundation's Baltimore Breakfast Challenge Program.

^{iv} Bartfeld JS, Ahn HM. Breakfast and the Achievement Gap Among Urban Minority Youth. *J Sch Health*. 2011; 81(10): 635-640.

^v Kleinman RE, Hall S, Green H, Korzec-Ramirez D, Patton K, Pagano ME, Murphy JM. Diet, Breakfast, and Academic Performance in Children. *Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism* 2002; 46 (suppl 1):24-30.

^{vi} Murphy JM. "Breakfast and Learning: An Updated Review." *Journal of Current Nutrition and Food Science* 2007; 3(1): 3-36.

^{vii} Murphy JM, Pagano ME, Nachmani J, Sperling P, Kane S, Kleinman RE. The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning: cross-sectional and longitudinal observations in an inner-city school sample. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. 1998;152(9), 899-907.

^{viii} Basiotis PP, Lino M, & Anand RS. Eating breakfast greatly improves schoolchildren's diet quality. Nutrition Insight, 15. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. 1999.

^{ix} Bhattacharya J, Currie J, & Haider SJ. Breakfast of champions? The School Breakfast Program and the nutrition of children and families. *Journal of Human Resources*. 2006;41(3), 445-466.

^x Clark MA, Fox MK. Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2009; 109(2 Supplement 1), S44-S56.

^{xi} Robinson-O'Brien R, Champoux B, Haines J, et al. Associations Between School Meals Offered Through the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program and Fruit and Vegetable Intake Among Ethnically Diverse, Low-Income Children. *J Sch Health*. 2010;80(10): 487-492.

^{xii} Gleason PM, Dodd AH. School breakfast program but not school lunch program participation is associated with lower body mass index. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2009; 109(2 Supplement 1), S118-S128.

^{xiii} Millimet DL, Tchernis R, Husain M. School nutrition programs and the incidence of childhood obesity. *Journal of Human Resources*, 2010;45(3), 640-654.

^{xiv} Benefits of School Breakfast Available at: <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast/benefits-school-breakfast>

^{xv} Share our Strength. Innovative Breakfast Delivery Options. Available at: https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/innovative_breakfast_delivery_options.pdf