



## School Breakfast Fact Sheet

### Expanding School Breakfast in NJ

A healthy breakfast helps students focus in class, score higher on standardized tests and avoid trips to the school nurse. When children are hungry, they struggle to concentrate on a reading assignment or solve a math problem.

Over the past seven years, New Jersey has made great strides in ensuring more students begin their day with a healthy meal. In 2018, the state ranked 19th nationally for its student participation, up from 46<sup>th</sup> in 2010.

This progress is the result of a growing number of New Jersey districts switching to serving breakfast during the regular school day, just like lunch, rather than before school when most students have not yet arrived. Known as breakfast after the bell, this approach significantly boosts student participation, giving more kids a nutritious start to the school day.

Despite this progress, about 300,000 eligible New Jersey students still miss out on this all-important morning meal. These are children already enrolled in the school meals program. The problem is when breakfast is served.

### Breakfast After the Bell is Do-Able

School districts across New Jersey have demonstrated that breakfast after the bell is do-able and that the entire school community benefits from this approach. In fact, a new state law requires districts with at least 70 percent of eligible students to serve breakfast after the bell.

**Federal reimbursements cover costs.** Districts with high concentrations of eligible children are usually able to cover the cost of providing breakfast to students since federal meal reimbursements increase, while operating costs remain relatively stable.

**Clean up is easy.** Using simple measures, like dedicated trash cans and clean-up wipes, many

districts have made breakfast a sanitary practice in classrooms across the state. In addition, breakfast products usually come in a bag or box, providing nutritious meals that are easy to serve and easy to clean up.

**Instructional time becomes more productive.** Typically, breakfast takes 10 to 15 minutes from start to finish. The New Jersey Department of Education has issued guidance stating that districts can count breakfast as instructional time when done during morning activities. Plus, teachers say that once students have eaten, they are more focused and have fewer behavioral problems, making instructional time more productive.

### **Fresh Ways to Serve School Breakfast**

Different models exist to serve breakfast after the bell. District officials should explore which option works best for their district. Many districts use different models in different schools, depending on need, logistics and other factors. Here are three commonly-used methods.

#### **Breakfast in the Classroom**

Food services staff pack meals into insulated containers, which are delivered to the classroom either by food service staff or students. As students come into the classroom, they grab a breakfast and sit down to eat. Students dispose of trash in cans used specifically for breakfast waste. Custodial staff pick up the trash cans.

#### **Grab and Go Breakfast**

Breakfast carts are stationed at the entrance of the school or other high traffic areas. Children “grab” a meal and “go” to class. This model is often used in middle and high schools.

#### **Second Chance Breakfast**

Teenagers may not be hungry when they first wake up in the morning or when they arrive at school. Serving breakfast after first period, commonly known as “Second Chance Breakfast,” allows students to eat when they are hungry. Students are offered meals, usually grab and go style, either between classes or during a “nutrition break” that occurs later in the morning.

### **Help is available!**

New Jersey school districts may qualify for grants and other technical assistance through various organizations to implement more effective school breakfast programs. For more information, go to [www.njschoolbreakfast.org](http://www.njschoolbreakfast.org) contact the New Jersey Department of Agriculture at (609) 984-0692. This fact sheet was prepared by Hunger Free New Jersey, [hungerfreenj.org](http://hungerfreenj.org).