

Tips for Implementing an Effective Grab and Go Breakfast Program

One of the most effective ways to boost school breakfast participation is to make it part of the school day. Traditional school breakfast programs often operate too early for students to participate, particularly if bus or carpool schedules do not allow them to get there on time. Other students end up skipping breakfast served in the cafeteria because they do not want to be singled out as poor. Grab and Go serving models can overcome these barriers.

WHAT IS GRAB AND GO?

With Grab and Go models, students pick up convenient pre-packaged breakfasts from mobile carts in high traffic areas, such as hallways, entryways or cafeterias. Students can eat in the classroom or elsewhere on school grounds before and after the bell has rung. On average, schools that implement this model reach 63% breakfast participation.¹

HOW CAN GRAB AND GO REACH THE MOST STUDENTS AT MY SCHOOL?

Allow students to grab and go to the Classroom. No Kid Hungry pilot schools that allowed students to take their breakfast to the classroom saw participation rates averaging 65%, compared to 44% in schools offering Grab and Go that could not be consumed in class.

Location matters. Grab and Go carts or kiosks should be placed in well-trafficked, accessible areas of the school. There is no single place to station Grab and Go breakfasts, and it will vary across schools. The key is to allow enough flexibility to move the location if needed.

Serve breakfast after the bell. It is important that students are able to consume breakfast after the official start of the school day, in their classrooms and other convenient locations. Schools that allow breakfasts to be eaten in 1st period, or as “Second Chance Breakfast” between 1st and 2nd periods experience substantially higher participation rates than schools that serve Grab and Go only before the bell.

Ensure that all school staff are aware of the program. Make sure they know when and where breakfasts will be served, and that kids will be permitted to eat in their classrooms.

Engage teachers, administrators, and other school staff. It’s important to get buy-in from all school staff who could be impacted by the program. Teachers and administrators will be on board when they understand the need for the program, how it operates, and the impact breakfast has on students. They can also be powerful advocates and help promote the program to students and parents.

Solicit feedback from students. Students are your customers and their opinion matters. After implementation and periodically thereafter, ask students about their satisfaction with the program and the menu. They can help you improve the program and make it a success.

Promote your program and encourage participation. Successful schools communicate their program in a number of creative ways, from developing videos, to printing the menu in school bulletins, to providing incentives for participation. Additionally, school leaders such as principals, coaches, or others with influence can encourage students to participate when they enter the building. This simple act of reminding students about the availability of breakfast has been shown to boost program participation.

¹ Participation measured by average daily participation F/RP school breakfast / average daily participation F/RP school lunches.



In 2015, No Kid Hungry provided small incentives to 28 schools to change the timing of their Grab and Go breakfast allowing students to eat after the bell. Twenty-two (79%) schools saw an increase in participation during or after the 2-week pilot period, with an average breakfast participation increase of 17 points.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Alternative Breakfast Equipment Guide

http://www.thelunchbox.org/assets/uploads/documents/Alternative_Breakfast_Equipment_Guide.pdf

Start School with Breakfast Toolkit

<https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast/nea-hin-school-breakfast-toolkit>

Ways to Make School Breakfast the Easy and Healthy Choice: Responding to the Students

https://www.educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/1415_np_brkfst_BestPractices.pdf

USDA's Team Nutrition Menu Planning Tools

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/menu-planning-tools/menu-planning-tools-school-food-service>

