



# Tips for Teachers and Education Support Professionals

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (Partners for BIC) came together in 2010 in response to their shared passion for improving childhood nutrition and its potential to have a positive impact on educational outcomes and child health. Partners for BIC has worked with school districts across the country to increase school breakfast participation through the implementation of free breakfast after the bell models (breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go,” and second chance) that are offered to all students. The traditional school breakfast program – served before school in the cafeteria – misses too many children due to barriers such as timing, convenience, and stigma associated with the program. Moving breakfast out of the cafeteria and into the classroom, making it part of the school day, removes these barriers, ensuring all students have access to nutritious breakfast. This best practice provides tips for teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) looking to incorporate breakfast after the bell programs and the benefits that can result.

## Breakfast After the Bell and School Stakeholders

Some of the most successful breakfast after the bell programs are built on strong stakeholder engagement from the very start. They are also built on ensuring that all members of the school community know what to do, how to do it, and have



the training and resources they need. Successful programs don't stop there – school stakeholders work hard to sustain the program, including making changes and adjustments as needed. Successful programs commit to communicating with families and the community on an ongoing basis. This includes providing them with information and soliciting their feedback on the program.

***“So the buy-in is not difficult when we harness that center of what is best for children in all situations. And our goal as educators is to make that happen.”***

***– Carolyn Vosburg, principal, Livingston Parish Public Schools, Louisiana***



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These best practices can be helpful whether a school is just starting to consider breakfast after the bell or has been doing it for a while. Designed for teachers and ESPs, this guide offers tips on things that can be accomplished independently and in collaboration with administrators and colleagues for a successful program. This includes involving the state and/or local affiliates of the organizations representing school staff. These tips draw on the experiences of educators around the country who have implemented breakfast after the bell programs and overcome challenges along the way, leading to thousands of children getting a healthy breakfast at school.

*"Change is a tough thing, but what I saw was very quick and easy, and I think now our kids just know when they come to school, there's going to be breakfast there for them, and they don't have to worry about eating at home."*

– Brenda Lemon, library media specialist, Logan-Hocking School District, Ohio; and president, Logan Education Association (LEA)

### Planning for Breakfast After the Bell

At the heart of a successful breakfast after the bell program is good planning. It is important to create a plan, make sure everyone understands it, and communicate it clearly.

- **Get everyone involved early.** Even before the first breakfast is served, a successful breakfast after the bell program brings stakeholders to the table early and often. Partners for BIC's success in expanding breakfast participation has been rooted in this principle. Who is everyone? It is administrators, food service staff, teachers, paraeducators, custodians, nurses, parents/guardians, and community anti-hunger advocates. In other words,

stakeholders include anyone who will be involved in the program, who can help support it, and who has an interest in feeding children. Breakfast after the bell offers great opportunities for local National Education Association affiliates to work with others on an issue that can make school better for students.

- **Explore different models of breakfast after the bell service and talk about what works best at a particular school.** Schools across the country have implemented breakfast after the bell using a variety of models, like breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go," second chance, and even vending machines that provide a complete breakfast that meets USDA service requirements. Work together as a group and consider multiple perspectives to figure out what delivery method might work best.
- **Don't be afraid to experiment.** It may take some trial and error to figure out how the program will work with everyone's interests in mind. Talk to colleagues about what they think will work. Decide how to assess or evaluate what is going to be done, and determine what adjustments will need to be made. Make sure that all staff understand how this process will work.
- **Learn as much as possible about the school food programs and the rules that govern them.** Partners for BIC has found that many school staff who do not work in food service are not aware of the strict federal nutrition standards that govern programs. School food recipes have been updated to meet current calorie, fat, and sodium limits, so the foods served in the school programs are healthier versions of items sold in stores and served in restaurants. The school cafeteria manager and district's



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nutrition director can answer questions and help school staff better understand the program.

- **Learn about how the program will handle any dietary restrictions.** This is another area where the cafeteria manager and district food service director can help provide much-needed information. This can include food allergies or other health restrictions, religious requirements, or other dietary requirements.
- **Visit other schools that have rolled out breakfast after the bell to see how their programs are implemented.** Partners for BIC has found that it can be helpful to set up “field trips” so staff can see how the program works in other schools and talk with their peers about their successes as well as the challenges they faced and how they were overcome.

*“We did a couple of time-studies at each location to try to work through the time-constraints and find which was best for those cafeteria workers to get it ready for the next day.”*

– Cassie McGowan, food service director, Logan-Hocking School District, Ohio

- **Work as a team to determine what is needed for successful implementation of the delivery model that was chosen.** Will extra trash supplies be needed? Are there enough food service technicians to account for extra meal prep? Are there stairs in the school, and if so, how will rolling carts get to the higher floors? What is a reasonably sized bag for staff to be able to lift for classroom delivery? This is where having custodians, food service staff, and classroom teachers on the team will make a difference.

- **Determine how the school will handle food waste.**

As with the nutrition standards, this is an area where Partners for BIC has found staff have a lot of questions and concerns. The team should determine the best way to manage this waste and make sure all staff understand the procedures.

- **Develop a plan for review and adjustment.** Every program will have challenges and may need to make changes. Staff should understand how the program will be reviewed, how feedback will be gathered, and how adjustments will be made. It is also important that they know how and to whom they should bring any concerns. Determine and communicate how staff will continue to work together to ensure that things run smoothly.
- **Consider starting with practice runs before full implementation.** To start to get a sense of how breakfast after the bell may work for them, some schools have introduced the program to one or two classrooms before rolling out the program to the whole school. Others have started with a partial meal, e.g., juice and an





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apple, before adding more foods. This allows for some challenges to be identified early and addressed on a smaller scale.

- **Provide staff with the necessary training.** Training needs will be different for various staff. Be sure that all staff involved understand how to count meals, manage uneaten food, and address issues. Training should be ongoing to keep staff up to date on any changes to the program. As new staff members join the school, there should be a plan to ensure that, as with other school procedures, they know what to do. It is quite possible that they may not have worked in a school with breakfast after the bell.
- **Share with all staff any guidance from the school district for breakfast after the bell.** Identify who in the school is responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the guidance, particularly as updates to procedures are made. For example, it is important to be clear on the district's rules about uneaten food. Even staff who are not directly involved in breakfast after the bell are likely to have questions. The more they understand, the more they can support the program.

### Implementing Breakfast After the Bell

Once the program is implemented, it can take some time for it to become truly "routine" – just part of the way the school operates each day. Part of developing this routine is developing age-appropriate routines in each classroom. Teachers and paraeducators have important roles to play in making sure that all students have a positive breakfast after the bell experience each and every day. Other staff, including food service, custodial, and office staff, are all important to keeping the program running smoothly and should be

included in all planning. Successful implementation is built on all staff working together.

- **Create classroom breakfast routines.** Even in a single school, every classroom is different. Teachers and paraeducators should develop a routine that works for them and their students. This can include classroom helpers for specific tasks, like making sure students know what they should do to manage spills, such as wiping them up or requesting assistance.

*"Teaching ELL [English Language Learning], I get a big mixture of different languages, religions, etc., [a]nd so with that comes different rules as to what they can eat, which our staff does a really good job of having a variety of food options, and it has provoked different conversations among the kids, which is really interesting."*

– Norah Silard, teacher, Austin Independent School District, Texas

- **Maximize the social-emotional learning potential of breakfast after the bell programs.** Research has found that breakfast after the bell can help build a positive social climate in the classroom. It can also provide opportunities for students to practice important skills, such as assisting others, mastering challenges, and dealing with messes. Staff and student conversations over breakfast can help build understanding. For example, teachers can use this time to talk with students about what is planned for the day. Another example is students using the time to learn about each other's cultures and faiths as they discuss why they may or may not eat a certain food at breakfast. Learn more about how breakfast





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after the bell programs can support social-emotional learning in students in *Best Practices in School Breakfast: Supporting Social-Emotional Learning*.

- **Use breakfast time to jump-start the day.** This morning meal can be a time to manage classroom tasks, such as homework collection and attendance. This is also a great time for a classroom story. Partners for BIC offers a list of “breakfast-friendly” books by grade level. Reading out loud to students can help create a pleasant atmosphere and build student literacy.
- **Model the behavior that is desired to come from students.** An important part of helping students build the skills to manage breakfast after the bell, including breakfast in the classroom, is showing them what to do. One way to do that is to have teachers and paraeducators eat with their students and include them in the meal count so they eat the same breakfast as their students.
- **Promote student involvement in breakfast after the bell.** While the specific ways in which students are involved will vary depending on the students’ age and the school culture, students can take on specific roles in the classroom. For example, student helpers can deliver breakfast or put out the trash. Students can also volunteer to participate in “taste tests” to help determine what foods to serve. At the secondary level, it may be appropriate to include students in the original planning group and in ongoing oversight. At all levels, don’t forget to include students with special educational needs or physical limitations.
- **Model respect for student diversity.** There are many reasons why students may or may not choose to eat. While breakfast after the bell programs encourage every child to eat, there are holidays where students

(particularly older ones) may be fasting, or there may be specific menu items that don’t comply with the dietary restrictions of a student’s religion. Encourage peers to discuss this respectfully and use it as an opportunity to talk about different cultures. Administrators can support staff by making sure that teachers and paraeducators have the information and skills they need to do this.

- **Encourage students to develop relationships with food service staff and vice versa.** In schools that use a “grab and go” model, Partners for BIC has found that this approach builds connections between food service staff and students. In breakfast in the classroom models, students can write thank-you notes or draw pictures for food service staff to express appreciation and build connections.

*“When we first thought about rolling out and really talking to our community and talking to the building about Breakfast in the Classroom, we took culture into account and really thought about how [would] we explain to parents how this is going to benefit students?”*

*– Christina Steele-Hantgin, principal, Austin Independent School District, Texas*

- **Engage other staff in implementation.** Staff not typically involved in feeding students can find that they have a role in new breakfast after the bell programs. Custodians may now have to clean up in different areas of the school. Front office staff need to know how to direct late arrivals in getting a breakfast. Health staff attending to students who don’t feel well now know that breakfast



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has been provided to the student, so they can rule out hunger as a cause of their discomfort. Bus drivers can provide students with directions on where they can get breakfast after they get off the bus and enter the school. At the bus stop, bus drivers can also serve as champions for the program by assuring parents and guardians that breakfast will be waiting for their child when they get to school.

### Sustaining Breakfast After the Bell

Once the breakfast after the bell program is up and running, it is important to pay attention to how things are going, and work with the school and district to make necessary adjustments to ensure continued success.

#### ■ Reengage stakeholders on a regular basis.

The same groups of people who were involved at the planning stage should be involved on an ongoing basis. It is important to assess what is and is not working well. If changes are needed, make sure everyone knows what they are, why they are happening, and how the changes impact them and their work.

- **Mentor new staff so they understand how breakfast after the bell works and how important it is to everyone at school.** New staff, in any job, may not be familiar with breakfast after the bell or how it is done at a particular school. As part of new staff orientation, administrators should make sure that information on breakfast after the bell is included, that staff have the opportunity to ask questions, and that they understand their roles.

***"Being flexible [is] the biggest technique or strategy that we've really found that has worked."***

*– Christina Steele-Hantgin, principal, Austin Independent School District, Texas*

- **Incorporate information about the breakfast after the bell program into the parent handbook, class handbook, and on the school website.** This communicates how important breakfast after the bell is to the entire school and can also help families become familiar with the program.

### Communicating about Breakfast After the Bell Successes

Good communication is a key element of a breakfast after the bell program, from planning it to implementing it and all the way through to sustaining the program. Working with the school and district to communicate a breakfast after the bell program's successes will help raise awareness and increase impact. Some achievements to highlight include increased participation in the program and in the level of student responsibility and involvement as they take on roles in the





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program, and decreases in the number of visits to the nurse's office and instances of absenteeism.

- **Highlight successful breakfast after the bell schools on a district's website and social media, and in newsletters.** This gets the word out more broadly and sends the message that breakfast after the bell is important to the district's leadership.
- **Recognize breakfast after the bell staff at school board meetings.** School board members can be champions for breakfast after the bell. One way to keep them engaged is through employee recognition.
- **Find other opportunities to share information about breakfast after the bell with the community.** This can include events like back-to-school night, school enrollment fairs, or presentations by district leaders to civic groups.
- **Share breakfast after the bell successes in local and state National Education Association affiliate newsletters and websites.** Breakfast after the bell is part of educators' commitment to supporting the whole child. If other unions or associations represent school staff

in the district, work with them to develop communications that show a shared commitment to supporting the whole child. Share these stories with other affiliates and the community at large.

### About Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (Partners for BIC) is a consortium of national education and nutrition organizations, including the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), the School Nutrition Foundation (SNF), the NEA Foundation, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Foundation.

With the generous support of the Walmart Foundation, Partners for BIC has provided technical assistance and over \$11 million in funding to support the implementation of breakfast after the bell models in more than 500 schools in 70 districts, leading to over 100,000 additional children eating a healthy school breakfast since 2010.

More information on Partners for BIC, as well as information on how to increase participation in your school breakfast program, can be found at <http://breakfastintheclassroom.org>.