

# BREAKFAST

KEY TO **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

## IT TAKES MORE THAN BOOKS FOR A CHILD TO LEARN: WHY SCHOOLS SHOULD EXPAND BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

*"School breakfast participation supports health and academic achievement, improves student behavior and lowers probability of obesity."*

- Food Research and Action Center, School Breakfast Report Card

*Of all the steps schools can take toward creating healthier higher-achieving students, implementing school breakfast — especially through alternative options such as breakfast in the classroom and grab 'n' go — is perhaps the simplest and most cost effective, with very possibly the most direct impact.*

- The Wellness Impact: Enhancing Academic Success through Healthy School Environments

## BENEFITS OF EXPANDED SCHOOL BREAKFAST

**Principals/Superintendents** benefit because:

- Academic performance improves, especially for children at nutritional risk
- Absences decrease
- Behavioral problems decrease

**Teachers** benefit because:

- Attention increases
- Nurse visits decrease
- Morning disruptions decrease

**School Nutrition Personnel** benefit because:

- Participation increases
- USDA funds increase
- Nutritious foods are served

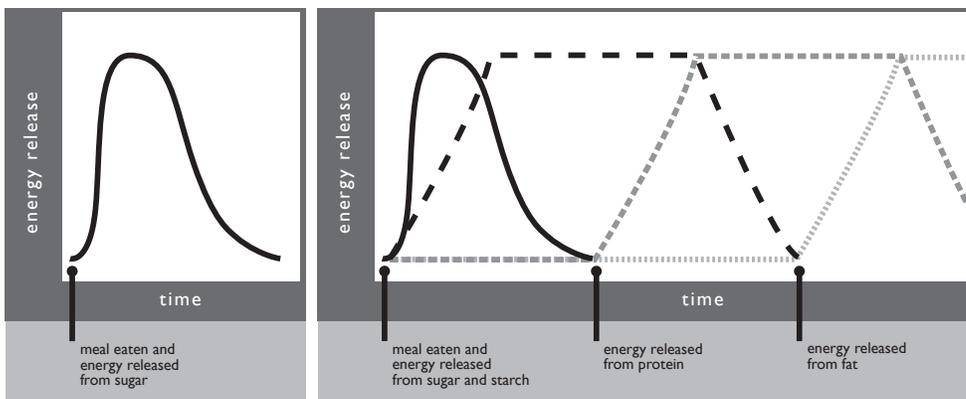
**Parents** benefit because:

- Morning are less rushed
- Kids start the day ready to learn
- Concerns about breakfast skipping are relieved



## SMART FOOD CHOICES ENHANCE LEARNING

Comparison of energy available for learning from two different breakfasts



Sugary foods such as fruit juice, soft drinks, and candy, eaten in place of a meal cause a quick rise in blood sugar and energy. About an hour later, blood sugar and energy decline rapidly, bringing on symptoms of hunger.

A typical school breakfast provides food from at least three Food Groups such as milk; fruit or juice; bread or cereal; and yogurt, peanut butter, egg or cheese. These foods contain carbohydrates, protein and fat which digest at different rates, keeping blood sugar up so energy levels are sustained throughout the morning.

**sugar**    **starch**    **protein**    **fat**

## RESEARCH CONFIRMS THAT BREAKFAST EATERS:

- Perform better on standardized tests, work faster and make fewer errors
- Are less likely to be late, absent or see the school nurse
- Are better able to concentrate on learning and are more creative
- Have fewer psychosocial problems and get along better with classmates
- Are better nourished and healthier
- Have improved brain activity in mathematical thinking with fewer errors on math equations



To see breakfast success stories, visit [WesternDairyAssociation.org](http://WesternDairyAssociation.org), search > breakfast.

## RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP

*Numerous organizations and government agencies provide resources that can help school leaders create change in their district or school. Here are just a few.*

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

(School Nutrition Foundation)  
<http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/SNF/BIC/>

### **Fuel Up to Play 60**

(NFL and National Dairy Council)  
[www.FuelUpToPlay60.com](http://www.FuelUpToPlay60.com)

### **HealthierUS School Challenge**

(U.S. Department of Agriculture)  
[www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html)

### **Share our Strength, No Kid Hungry®**

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast>

### **What School Administrators Can Do to Enhance Student Learning by Supporting a Coordinated Approach to Health**

(American School Health Association)  
[www.ashaweb.org/files/public/Miscellaneous/Administrators\\_Coordinated\\_Approach\\_Support.pdf](http://www.ashaweb.org/files/public/Miscellaneous/Administrators_Coordinated_Approach_Support.pdf)

For a more complete listing of resources of value to school leaders, see the full report at [www.GENYOUthFoundation.org](http://www.GENYOUthFoundation.org)

## BREAKFAST BOOSTS BRAIN POWER

**The Proof is in the Brain.** New research into how the brain is affected by nutrition and physical activity is strengthening the learning connection argument, as neuroscience is making clear the positive effects of both on students' achievement.

*Hungry children are distracted children. We want to make sure nothing gets in the way of our children performing well academically, including hunger.*

*More than 16 million children in this country struggle with hunger. School teachers say they see students regularly coming to school hungry. Schools are on the front lines of the fight to end childhood hunger, and I often hear stories of teachers who spend their own money on food for their students. Teachers do this because they know that hungry students have trouble learning when they are focused on their empty stomachs rather than classroom activities. These students often lack concentration and struggle with poor academic performance, behavior problems, and health issues.*

*I encourage you to seek out ways to increase participation in the school breakfast program. In doing so, we can ensure students are starting the school day with the food they need to enable them to be successful in the classroom.*

- United States Education Secretary, Arne Duncan

## EXPANDING BREAKFAST

The traditional school breakfast program model, where breakfast is served in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day, often suffers from low participation. Some of the barriers to participation include late or erratic bus schedules, families' inability to pay the reduced-price breakfast costs, stigma associated with eating in the cafeteria, or parents' lack of awareness of the program.

Moving breakfast out of the cafeteria before school and making it part of the school day is the most effective strategy to reap the positive results of better learning, enhanced nutrition and improved participation.

- **Breakfast-in-the-Classroom** — food is delivered to each classroom and is often combined with attendance taking, announcements and read aloud.
- **Grab 'n' Go** — students pick up bagged meals that are available in high traffic areas. Students eat on the way to class, in the classroom or in designated areas.
- **Breakfast after the Bell or Second Chance** — food is served mid-morning. Schools serve breakfast in the same manner as they would with traditional Grab n' Go breakfast.



**WDA** WESTERN DAIRY ASSOCIATION  
*Dairy farmers nourishing people and planet with world-class care.*

[WesternDairyAssociation.org](http://WesternDairyAssociation.org)

## WE CAN HELP

Contact Western Dairy Association for information about school breakfast expansion grants for your school.

**Call 800-274-6455 or 303-451-7711.**

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