

School Breakfast – A food service opportunity and student health enhancer

As many students' daily schedules are filled with school, homework, sports, clubs and in the later years-work, time for sleep is decreased and breakfast may be skipped as students rush to get ready in the morning. However, as many studies suggest, breakfast really is the most important meal of the day, especially for students. Since students are running out the door for school without breakfast, your school's breakfast food service operations can be extremely important. Learn more about why breakfast will boost your students' performance and how you can increase breakfast participation at your school.

Breakfast fuels students' brains

Everyone has heard doctors, parents, grandparents and teachers tout how breakfast is the most important meal of the day – and they are right! This saying has even more truth in it when referring to students. Breakfast helps fuel the brain after a night of fast and reenergizes it for the day. This helps improve the learning process, as well as aid weight management- helping to combat childhood obesity. Studies have shown that students who eat breakfast have increased concentration, better memorization, enhanced problem-solving skills and higher test scores compared to those who skip the first meal of the day. In addition, a healthy breakfast can satisfy a quarter of the daily nutrition a body requires and decrease the possibility of eating fast food and other unhealthy, but quick meal options.



What are the negative effects of skipping breakfast?

Students who do not eat a daily breakfast are more likely to experience headaches, sleepiness, muscle fatigue, anger and irritability. These negative physical and psychological effects can hinder a child's learning ability and overall mood.

An opportunity for school food service



With schools concerned with their students' well-being and the opportunity to increase breakfast participation, many food service professionals are implementing programs that enhance the attractiveness of school breakfast. Through resources and contests sponsored by the School Nutrition Association (SNA), National School Breakfast Week and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), many schools have found exciting ways to encourage breakfast among students. In addition, the SBP provides financial assistance to States to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions. Daily, the SBP helps serve over 12 million children.

It is clear that breakfast is beneficial to children's health, but it can also be beneficial to the school's food service operations if a program is implemented correctly. Nationwide, schools are utilizing various

food service equipment and implementing creative ways to increase breakfast participation among students.

This past March during the National School Breakfast Week, SNA hosted the School Breakfast Detectives Campaign. The campaign enabled students to become 'detectives' and discover the healthy benefits of eating breakfast. Tools as simple as nutrition puzzles, a book cover contest and other activity sheets are a great way to engage students regarding the importance of breakfast.

In addition, some schools have utilized food service equipment, such as a Mart Cart, to deliver breakfast to classrooms during the morning. With the ability to sell milk, juice, fruit, yogurt, cereal and other healthy options at affordable prices, schools can easily serve students who have skipped breakfast that day or simply need a snack before their late lunch. One Illinois school that implemented a breakfast cart in their operations has seen a nearly 200% increase in morning meal counts.



These are only a few ways that schools are working to increase breakfast participation among their students. Increasing breakfast participation at your school will help energize students to make classes run more smoothly, develop healthier eating habits and fight childhood obesity. Make sure that your food service operations are demonstrating that *breakfast really is the most important meal of the day*.

How do you increase breakfast participation at your school? Do you have the right food service equipment to serve breakfast?