



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Connecticut Public School Principals  
FROM: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education  
DATE: April 4, 2013  
SUBJECT: Supporting Student Success through the School Breakfast Program

Each day, you, your teachers, and your school staff put forth an incredible and noble effort to ensure that all students in your school are prepared to succeed in college, career and life. To that end, we must do everything within our power to ensure that students begin the day ready to learn and are positioned for success. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) would like to underscore the importance of implementing a School Breakfast Program (SBP) as part of a combined effort to ensure school readiness and enhance the overall health of Connecticut students.

There is no doubt that students from low-income families are the most at-risk for hunger; however, when it comes to breakfast, too many Connecticut students arrive at school without a morning meal, irrespective of household income. Furthermore, according to the *Food Research and Action Center School Breakfast Scorecard* released in January 2013, for the **seventh consecutive year**, Connecticut was last in the nation in the percentage of National School Lunch Program schools that also offer breakfast. I believe—and I hope you agree—we can do better!

Here are some benefits to hosting a SBP at your school:

- The SBP is federally funded through reimbursements, similar to the free and reduced priced lunch program. In some instances, state funding is also available. Serving breakfast does not have to cost schools more money, and in some cases it can benefit the bottom line of a district's food service account.
- Schools routinely encourage students to eat a healthy breakfast during standardized testing weeks; however, studies reveal that breakfast is a performance enhancer *throughout* the school year. Research has shown that students who routinely eat a nourishing breakfast in school perform better academically and have lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness.
- The SBP is not just for students eligible for free and reduced price meals. It is for all students regardless of their eligibility status.
- School breakfast may be served and consumed in the classroom while instructional activities are underway, without impacting instructional time. This in-classroom model may take place by having breakfast delivered directly to the classroom, or by having students pick up breakfast at a centralized location to bring to the classroom.

Starting a SBP is easy, and there are many resources available to assist in the implementation of the program in your school. The Connecticut Breakfast Expansion Team (CBET), a collaboration of the CSDE, End Hunger CT!, the New England Dairy & Food Council, Action for Healthy Kids, and the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, provides one-on-one support to schools wishing to launch a SBP or to improve the performance of an existing program. A frequently asked questions document is attached with additional information.

I hope you will consider taking advantage of this important opportunity. Please feel free to contact Jackie Schipke, CSDE Education Consultant, by telephone at 860-707-2123 or e-mail at [jackie.schipke@ct.gov](mailto:jackie.schipke@ct.gov) to discuss the steps involved with the implementation or expansion of the SBP in your school.

SP:js

cc: Superintendents of Schools

Attachment: (1)

# School Breakfast Program

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***What is the School Breakfast Program?***

The School Breakfast Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public schools, nonprofit private schools, and residential childcare institutions. The program began as a pilot project in 1966; in 1975, it became permanent. The School Breakfast Program is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service. Administered at the state level, by Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the program operates through agreements with local school food authorities.

### ***How does the School Breakfast Program work?***

The School Breakfast Program operates in the same manner as the National School Lunch Program. School districts and independent schools that choose to partake in the breakfast program receive cash subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for every meal served. In order to qualify for this reimbursement, breakfasts served by schools must meet federal nutritional requirements, and schools must offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible students.

### ***How much reimbursement do schools receive?***

Most of the support USDA provides to schools in the School Breakfast Program comes in the form of a cash reimbursement for each breakfast served. The current (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) basic cash reimbursement rates are:

Free breakfasts \$1.55/meal

Reduced-price breakfasts \$1.25/meal

Paid breakfasts \$0.27/meal

Schools may qualify for higher, federal "severe need" reimbursements if 40% or more of lunches served were free or at a reduced price in the second preceding year. In Connecticut, there is additional state funding available for schools if 20% or more of lunches served were free or at a reduced price in the second preceding year.

### ***Why should we offer breakfast at school?***

Years of research have demonstrated that breakfast is the most important meal of the day for student's health and academic achievement. For various reasons, many children regularly skip breakfast. Students who skip breakfast are more likely to have lower math scores, poorer cognitive functioning, slower memory recall and are more likely to repeat a grade. (Food Research and Action Center, *Breakfast for Learning: Scientific research on the link between children's nutrition and academic performance* <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>)

Deloitte Consulting Group recently completed a social impact analysis for the School Breakfast Program, which demonstrated that students who participate in the School Breakfast Program attend 1.5 more days of school annually, score 17.5% higher on math tests, and are less likely to have disciplinary problems. A copy of the Deloitte report may be found at this link: <http://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/school-breakfast-white-paper.pdf>

### ***When can my school start the School Breakfast Program?***

Schools may begin the School Breakfast Program at any point in the school year. One or more schools in a district may participate.

***How can I get the School Breakfast Program started in my school?***

To ensure success of your program, we strongly recommend conversations between principals, custodial staff, teachers/paraprofessionals, teachers unions, parents, students and food service staff prior to starting the School Breakfast Program in your school. Contact the CSDE Child Nutrition Office for assistance and guidance on the documentation required to start the School Breakfast Program.

For information on the School Breakfast Program, visit the CSDE School Breakfast Program Web page: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320662>.

***Is there any assistance available to help me plan for the School Breakfast Program?***

Yes, the Connecticut Breakfast Expansion Team (CBET) will gladly provide assistance. CBET offers personal, one-on-one assistance to schools in their efforts to start or grow a School Breakfast Program. Through outreach activities, CBET is spreading the word about school breakfast programs and the many benefits to students and school districts alike. CBET can help with areas such as financial analysis, resources, networking, marketing, program development, outreach, and more. Since CBET's inception in 2009, more than 140 CT Schools have begun participating in the School Breakfast Program. Contact Jackie Schipke at the CSDE to request this assistance. (Contact information follows below)

Additionally, the National Education Association (NEA) Health Information Network published an excellent guide to increasing school breakfast participation. This guide, *Start School with Breakfast*, may be found at this link: <http://www.neahin.org/educator-resources/start-school-with-breakfast.html>

***Does breakfast have to be served prior to the start of the school day?***

No, there are many ways to get breakfast to the students. While most schools still employ traditional cafeteria-style service before the start of the instructional day, there are other methods to serve breakfast that are gaining in popularity. These include Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab n'Go Breakfast, Breakfast Vending and Second Chance Breakfast.

***What is Breakfast in the Classroom?***

Breakfast in the Classroom is an alternative serving method that schools can use to provide children with a nutritious meal in the familiar surroundings of their classroom. Prior to implementing a classroom meal service program, it is recommended that the approval and support of administrators, principals and teachers be obtained. Breakfast may be served and consumed in the classroom while instructional activities are underway, with no impact on instructional time.

***Does Breakfast in the Classroom result in lost instructional time?***

According to the NEA publication, *Start School with Breakfast* (<http://www.neahin.org/educator-resources/start-school-with-breakfast.html>), this is a misconception. Teachers report that Breakfast in the Classroom does not take away from instructional time since breakfast usually occurs during morning announcements and attendance time, time that was not being used for regular classroom instruction anyway. In fact, instructional time may even be gained as breakfast at school results in fewer nurse visits, less tardiness and absenteeism, and fewer behavior problems.

**For more information:**

For more information on the operation of the School Breakfast Program in Connecticut, contact Jackie Schipke, Education Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education by phone at 860-807-2123 or e-mail at [jackie.schipke@ct.gov](mailto:jackie.schipke@ct.gov).