



Breakfast in the Classroom: Frequently Asked Questions

These are general answers to common questions about the breakfast in the classroom program.

1. Breakfast has been offered in the cafeteria for years. Why does breakfast in the classroom increase participation?

One of the greatest benefits of Breakfast in the Classroom, is that it can dramatically increase participation, up to 98% of enrollment. When students see others eating breakfast they will naturally join in.

With traditional breakfast service in the cafeteria participation averages 30% of enrollment.

It can be difficult to attract students to traditional program for many reasons including:

- Buses may not arrive on time
- Students are in a rush to get to class or are busy visiting with friends, so they don't take the time to go to the cafeteria even if they are hungry.
- There is a potential stigma that school breakfast in the cafeteria is for low income students.

2. How do you build school community support for breakfast in the classroom program?

To build support for your breakfast in the classroom program, it is important to make sure everyone that is involved with the program – parents, students, teachers and support staff – are aware of the program beforehand and know what the expectations are. It is also important to have a system in place to handle feedback on the program during the start up phase.

3. How long does breakfast in the classroom take and will it take away instructional time?

Concerns about lost instructional time have been raised before; however, in practice little teaching time is lost when using a Breakfast in the Classroom model. From start to finish breakfast in the classroom takes about 10 to 15 minutes to serve, eat and clean up. Teachers report that Breakfast in the Classroom does not take away from instructional time because students are already settled down and focused when instruction begins. In some cases, moving breakfast to the classroom leads to a gain in instructional time because students are already settled down and focused when instruction begins.

In the October 2012 Dallas ISD Breakfast in the Classroom Teacher survey, teachers offered this advice to prevent lost instructional time:

- 1) Make sure students are in class at least 15 minutes before start instructional time.
- 2) Be clear on breakfast service time. Have a start and ending time.
- 3) Operate class while students eat, so no instructional time is lost.

4. How much extra work is involved for teachers?

Naturally with breakfast in the classroom, there is a little more work for teachers. However, current teacher participants report the benefits of having children settled, and ready-to-learn, far outweigh the additional effort. In the October 2012 Dallas ISD Teacher Survey on the Breakfast in the Classroom program, 68% of respondents believe the advantages of the breakfast in the classroom program is worth the effort.

Teacher survey respondents at schools with the breakfast in the classroom program offered this advice to help the program run smoothly:

- 1) Speak with other school staff and administrators that have experience with breakfast in the classroom.
- 2) Have a well thought out plan of action and be prepared.
- 3) Make expectations clear to parents and staff
- 4) Be patient. Think of the benefits to the students.

5. Doesn't serving breakfast in the classroom generate a lot of trash?

The Breakfast in the Classroom menu features low mess, easy-to-eat items. Trash is a frequent concern before the program begins, but schools that have introduced the program haven't experienced problems. Your food service staff daily provides trash bags for breakfast in the classroom. After breakfast, teachers places trash bag outside the door and food service or custodial staff pick up in a timely fashion. A moist blue towel is also daily provided for the teacher in case there are any spills and students receive a moist towelette to clean hands.

In the October 2012 Dallas ISD Breakfast in the Classroom Teacher Survey, teachers offer these clean up strategies:

- 1) Have a routine in place for cleaning up after breakfast.
- 2) Allow 5 minutes for clean up.
- 3) Have a workable plan to dispose of waste.
- 4) Assign classroom helpers to assist with clean-up

6. What do we do if a child doesn't want to eat breakfast?

The breakfast in the classroom program is offered to all students, but it is the student's choice whether or not to participate.

7. How should we handle if a child arrives early? Arrives late?

It is recommended schools set a start time for service. Due to food quality, food safety and accountability, students should not be served breakfast prior to the designated service start time. Food may not be kept in room, but students arriving late may be sent to the cafeteria to pick up a meal, at the discretion of the teacher and principal.

Sources: **National Dairy Council**, *Expanding Breakfast: Frequently Asked Questions*, **Dallas ISD Food and Child Nutrition Services**, *Breakfast in the Classroom Binder, 2012*, **NEA Health Information Network**, *School Breakfast Tool Kit*, **Dallas ISD Teacher Survey on Breakfast in the Classroom Program**, October 2012