

Mealtime Sampler

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Breakfast in the Classroom? Yes, it Really Works!

Serving Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) generates extraordinary participation. Yet often, viability concerns with teachers, administration, and staff can keep service in the cafeteria. Here are two motivating stories from school nutrition professional on how BIC has worked in their schools.

Kevin Hannon, Food Service Director, Port Jervis CSD, Port Jervis, N.Y.

Kevin Hannon has offered BIC free to all his elementary schools for 2 years. Prior to implementing it, only 15% of children ate breakfast in the cafeteria, and teachers complained kids arrived late to class.

Three years ago, Hannon was awarded a BIC pilot program grant for two schools. The pilot was a huge success, with participation increasing to 100% of attendance each day, and test scores rising 8%.

"Teachers in the pilot were so happy that even the most hesitant have helped fuel the program," reports Hannon. "They tell me the act of eating calms kids down and kids know more of the announcements, because they're listening, not talking." Student participation has remained at 100% of the daily attendance.

To start, each classroom was given a different colored waste basket, just for breakfast trash and paper towels. A large garbage can was put in the hallway on each floor and when breakfast is over a child from each class puts their trash in the large can. Hannon serves a nutritious, cold breakfast, made up of milk, juice and entree items, such as muffins, cheese sticks and cereal. Staff loads up breakfast in two milk crates per class and either delivers it on wheeled carts or children bring the milk crates back and forth, depending on student ages and the school. Hannon reports "it works like a charm."



Hannon endorses the program, saying, "Skipping breakfast leads to obesity because a balance of food is what helps you efficiently burn calories. We've come up with a way to help our kids start each day on the path to wellness and to educate them by showing them good choices."

Linda Willman, RD, Nutrition Service Program Administrator, Laramie County School District 1, Cheyenne, WY.

The main competitor for children's participation in Linda Willman's breakfast program was the playground - the playground was clearly winning.

Determined to "beat" the competition, Willman decided to serve free BIC, after hearing a colleague's testimonial. Beginning with one elementary classroom and expanding to five, student participation has jumped from 30% to 95%.

Willman serves a healthy, cold breakfast with two daily entree choices, such as peanut butter and jelly, string cheese and crackers, or yogurt, along with milk and juice. Breakfast is delivered in milk crates by foodservice staff on long rolling carts. Double bagged trash bags are provided and when breakfast is over, one is sealed and placed in the hall, leaving the other bag for daily garbage.

"Initially teachers were wary Breakfast in the Classroom would take valuable class time and create a mess," Willman says. "We kept our promise that breakfast would take 10 minutes and be only easy-to-eat items. Now teachers say classroom breakfast is 'fabulous,' it cuts down on tardiness and settles kids down." Teachers are using the time for housekeeping duties and to read to the children.

Willman's advice is to start BIC in one school and then let teachers involved present the program to their colleagues. "Teachers listen to other teachers," comments Willman. "So, I give a breakfast benefit overview and then sit down and let the teachers tell their story and 'sell' it."