



SCHOOL: Jay High School, Jay, Maine
SCHOOL NUTRITION DIRECTOR: Brenda Adams
ALTERNATE BREAKFAST SERVICE: Breakfast After 1st Period

★ BACKGROUND

Brenda Adams had the best proof on a successful way to increase low breakfast participation—first hand experience! She had worked at another district offering Breakfast After 1st Period. Jay High School’s assistant principal had also worked at the previous school, and was a strong ally in encouraging the principal to try the program. At Jay, only about 15 of the 325 students ate breakfast in the cafeteria at 7:30 a.m. Low participation was attributed to many students driving to school and arriving just in time for that 8:00 a.m. bell. Also, Adams feels typical teenagers don’t get hungry until they are up for a couple of hours, so a traditional breakfast doesn’t hit at the right time.

★ IMPLEMENTATION

Adams and her staff planned a Breakfast After 1st Period pilot, scheduled to last a few months. From 9:20 to 9:33 a self-service breakfast was available in the cafeteria, staffed with two cashiers and a line person. Breakfast could easily be eaten in 13 minutes. At one window, called “Breakfast Express” students could purchase a 75 cent breakfast, including meals like cereal, muffins, milk and juice, or hot breakfast sausage muffins, milk and juice. The other window was a la carte, including menu items like yogurt fruit parfaits, 16 oz. plastic single-serves of flavored milk, cinnamon rolls and cheese omelets.

★ IMPACT

During the pilot, participation at breakfast went from 15 to 135 per day. When the administration saw there were no problems, the program became permanent. Kenric R. Charles, Jay High School’s assistant principal comments, “Students are expected to get up early, get on buses and often arrive at school with nothing in their stomachs. This is unhealthy for the changing teenage body. We used to have less than 2% of our students eat before school, and now that we do it after 1st period, we have 35% to 40% who eat.”

Many teachers come to the cafeteria and join the students for breakfast. The atmosphere is friendly, with quiet socialization and no need for supervision. The students themselves offer the most positive reactions. Peter J. Brown, principal of Jay High School, fully endorses the program, relaying that the program “has proven to be very popular with students, parents and faculty alike.” Brown continues, “An incident showing student appreciation of the breakfast program occurred when inclement weather caused a delayed start. To get as much class time as possible that day, I did away with the break. My office was swamped with students requesting the break be put back in the schedule. I did and really haven’t thought of taking it out of the schedule again!”

★ WORDS OF ADVICE

“It’s all about timing,” emphasizes Adams. “You have to find the right time that works for your staff and students. Breakfast After 1st Period does it for us. We’re here for the children—that means serving them sound nutrition when they’re ready to eat it. It’s workable, it’s possible and rewarding, for students as well as the foodservice program.”