



**DISTRICT:**

Washington Elementary School District,  
Phoenix, Ariz.

**FOODSERVICE DIRECTOR:**

David Caldwell

**ALTERNATE BREAKFAST SERVICE:**

Universal Breakfast; Breakfast in the Classroom

**★ BACKGROUND**

Back in 1991 David Caldwell wanted universal breakfast at Washington Elementary School District that has 32 schools, with 25,000 students. Caldwell, convinced that “breakfast is good for kids and good for business” was concerned his traditional program, generating 17 percent participation, was not reaching children due to the stigma associated with school breakfast. He tried instituting free breakfast for all, but did not get approval.

In 1997, the Universal School Breakfast Pilot (USBP) was announced and Caldwell, grasping this golden opportunity, applied and was selected to participate. Based on the USBP Caldwell has 12 control schools without, and 12 treatment schools with, free breakfast for all. Caldwell considered expanding breakfast by serving on buses or from carts, but after seeing Breakfast in the Classroom (BITC) success results achieved in Maryland and Minnesota\*, Caldwell realized that serving in the classroom was the key for achieving the highest participation and benefit levels.

**★ IMPLEMENTATION**

Caldwell began a BITC pilot at a volunteer school, to work out procedures. Now, five schools are on board. Foodservice staff packs dry supplies and food on carts the day before and in the morning adds entrees, milk and juice, and delivers to classrooms 20 minutes before children arrive. There is a five week menu rotation with hot and cold entrees like one-half grilled cheese sandwich, breakfast on a stick (pancakes wrapped around sausages), and string cheese. Teachers fill out accountability sheets and foodservice picks them up with leftover food, supplies and trash after breakfast.

**★ IMPACT**

Schools serving free breakfast in the cafeteria have a 12 percent increase for a total participation of 29 percent. Schools serving free BITC have an impressive 85 percent participation. All staff has been surveyed. Before BITC, 27 percent “strongly supported” the program, now 49 percent “strongly support it,” and 41 percent feel its affect on student attentiveness is “somewhat” or “greatly improved.”

“Initially, none of the teachers were positive about Breakfast in the Classroom,” reflects Caldwell. “Now, most are very positive and they’ve jumped on the ‘ally’ band wagon. Foodservice has even paid for substitute teachers to go to non-participating schools so the teachers can talk face-to-face with participating teachers.”Caldwell’s goal is to keep “chipping away” at resistance, eventually serving BITC at all schools.

**★ WORDS OF ADVICE**

“Do not try to reinvent the wheel,” suggests Caldwell. “A lot has been done before you, so call other directors for solutions. Once you get approval for Breakfast in the Classroom, put your best foot forward. Carefully plan your approach, think about your delivery procedure, how you are going to keep hot items warm, foods from leaking, etc., because if you haven’t thought it out, you won’t be there for long.”

\*Based on Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report, 10/01, and Minnesota Dept. of Children, Families & Learning Studies. For the studies go to [www.nutritionexplorations.org](http://www.nutritionexplorations.org) and click on the School Foodservice Section.