



BEST PRACTICES TO OPERATE BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL WITHOUT UNIVERSAL FREE MEALS

There are many things to consider when planning a Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) program where breakfast is served after the official start of the school day using innovative models like Breakfast in the Classroom and Grab and Go. If your breakfast program does not include universal free meals, you may be wondering how to implement BAB to ensure the counting and claiming process remains accurate and that students not participating in the program do not feel left out. No Kid Hungry has collected best practices from schools that operate BAB programs but do not offer universal free meals that you can apply to your program to ensure smooth operations.

Best Practices

Give Parents the Opportunity to Opt Out

No matter which BAB model you implement, it is important to inform parents of any changes to the school's breakfast program. Give parents an opportunity to opt out if they do not want their child participating in the breakfast program. These parent resources can be customized so you can personalize communication about your BAB program.

- Breakfast FAQs for Parents ([customizable English](#) and [customizable Spanish](#)): add important breakfast program information while providing common answers to frequently asked questions
- Breakfast in the Classroom [Customizable Letter to Families](#): educate families about a new BIC program

Breakfast After the Bell Models

Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)

- Students eat breakfast in their classroom after the official start of the school day. Students or staff deliver breakfasts to classrooms from the cafeteria via coolers or insulated rolling bags. BIC takes 15 minutes on average.

Grab and Go (GNG)

- Breakfast is served from one or more central locations via breakfast carts/kiosks, or via quick cafeteria lines. Breakfast can be eaten in the classroom or a common area

Second Chance Breakfast

- Breakfast is usually served mid-morning, usually between 1st and 2nd periods to allow students that were not hungry first thing in the morning another opportunity to eat. Second Chance is most often served using a Grab and Go model, or by reopening the cafeteria and allowing students time to eat before they return to class.

- Second Chance Breakfast [Customizable Letter to Families](#): inform families about a new Second Chance Breakfast program
- [Sample Parent Opt-Out Letter](#): give parents a way to formally opt out of the breakfast program

BIC Requires Teacher Buy-in and Training

All breakfasts eaten via BIC must be tracked and recorded to meet federal compliance standards. Support from educators is crucial in making this model successful and keeping accurate counts of student breakfast participation. Both teachers and students can play a role in this process. Here are several examples:

- **Teacher-led participation tracking**
 - While taking attendance, teachers record the students who ate breakfast. If a paper roster is used, the roster is sent back to the cafeteria with the classroom breakfast equipment. The cafeteria staff is then responsible for charging students' school nutrition accounts. If participation is recorded via a digital attendance tracker, the principal and school nutrition director coordinate to exchange digital information. Once the school nutrition staff receives the digital record, they charge students' accounts.
- **Student involvement in participation tracking**
 - Cafeteria staff create laminated cards with each student's name. These cards are sent to the classroom with all the breakfast supplies every morning. When students take a breakfast, they put their name cards into a receptacle, verifying they participated in the breakfast program. Students who do not take breakfast put their names in a separate receptacle indicating they did not participate. The name cards are returned to the cafeteria with the remaining breakfast supplies. Students who ate breakfast are charged appropriately on their school nutrition accounts. This puts the counting and claiming responsibility on the student rather than the teacher (this method would require additional student onboarding).

Grab and Go Gives Students Options

The GNG model puts the decision-making power into students' hands as they choose their breakfast on the way to class. Several best practices can make GNG even more successful:

- **Communicate to students and parents**
 - Communicating the details of the breakfast program to parents and students, including the cost of breakfast, the time breakfast is served, and the menu items reduces the confusion that might unnecessarily arise.
 - Student outreach
 - Communicate breakfast program details specific to students, especially the pricing categories. Some schools report that students value breakfast more when they know they have to pay for it.
 - Parent outreach
 - Using multiple communication channels to educate parents about the school breakfast program increases the likelihood that parents understand the breakfast models being implemented and the pricing structure. Parent-teacher conferences, text message alerts, Robocalls, and informational handouts are all opportunities to educate parents. This includes providing students with a concise resource they can take home to parents. (see above for examples)

- **Make your POS wireless**
 - Using a wireless POS system on breakfast carts makes the checkout process quick and easy and guarantees that counting and claiming are done without errors.
- **Cart location is key**
 - Choosing high-traffic locations for your breakfast cart guarantees that students who want breakfast can find it. If students cannot easily spot the cart, they may choose to skip out on breakfast, no matter the cost.

Second Chance is a Win

Second Chance breakfast served via GNG with a POS system is another way to offer non-universal meals to students whose hunger comes in mid-morning. Because Second Chance is served later in the morning, students who already ate breakfast before school will not feel left out if they choose not to participate. Here are more tips to increase your Second Chance breakfast participation with non-universal meals:

- **Timing is everything**
 - Schedule Second Chance breakfast at a time that is most opportunistic for students. This model tends to be the most effective for middle and high school students, so understanding when students would benefit from a meal mid-morning is key.
- **Location, location, location**
 - Put breakfast carts in the most high-traffic areas of the school so students passing by can see the breakfast offerings.
- **Communicate the cost**
 - Communicating with students and parents about the different breakfast prices assures that those stakeholders understand why they may be charged for eating breakfast, so there are no surprises when the monthly school nutrition bill comes.
- **Promote the program**
 - Some students choose not to eat breakfast in the cafeteria because of inconvenience or stigma. Second Chance may capture those students, therefore it is vital to promote Second Chance so students know it is an option.

Switching from traditional cafeteria-style breakfast to BAB improves student access to breakfast, which increases participation and school nutrition revenue. The more students eat school breakfast, the better the attendance rates and the higher the test scores, generally speaking. Some school districts have found that making the switch to BAB increases participation enough that the cost to provide universal meals is surprisingly low, and administrators opt to pick up the tab using the district general fund. School breakfast is a win-win, no matter how you slice it.

To learn more about Breakfast After the Bell, visit the No Kid Hungry [Center for Best Practices](#)