

High School Breakfast: Creative Ideas

Shared by School Nutrition Leaders at ANC 2026

Breakfast doesn't feel appealing to them.

- **Serve freshly made waffles** with DIY fruit toppings one morning each week. The aroma creates excitement and encourages students to arrive on time!

— *District in California*

- **Rebrand cafeterias as "school nutrition restaurants"** and introduce an Executive Chef to elevate the dining experience.

— *District in Virginia*

- **Serve "hot chocolate milk" during winter** breakfast service to create a cozy seasonal favorite.

— *District in Indiana*

- **Remove foil wrappers from commercially prepared breakfast sandwiches.** This simple change to the presentation helped students perceive the sandwiches as fresher and more appealing.

— *District in West Virginia*

- **Invite high school students to volunteer** during breakfast service to increase peer engagement.

— *District in Canada*

- **Offer limited-time menu promotions**, such as Smoothie Fridays and seasonal build-your-own breakfast bowls and protein muffins.

— *Ideas shared by multiple districts*

Breakfast happens too early.

- **Rename Second Chance Breakfast as "Brunch"** to better match students' routines and preferences. Most high school breakfast participation now occurs during this later service.

— *District in California*

- **Move to breakfast after the bell** (during first period or a morning passing period), when students are much more likely to eat.

— *Shared by multiple districts*

Students prioritize social time.	● Place breakfast coolers beside school buses, so students can grab breakfast as they exit. — <i>District in Minnesota</i> ● Feature a student DJ during breakfast to create a fun, café-like atmosphere that encourages students to eat together. — <i>District shared at ANC</i> ● Add Second Chance Breakfast to create another opportunity for students to eat. Our breakfast participation <u>more than doubled</u>. — <i>District shared at ANC</i>
Students arrive late or have little time.	● Allow students to pre-order breakfast on school-issued iPads and pick up a labeled breakfast bag the next morning. — <i>District in West Virginia</i> ● Install reimbursable breakfast vending machines so students can access breakfast later in the morning. — <i>District shared at ANC</i>
School routines get in the way.	● Encourage teachers to eat with students to help normalize school breakfast. — <i>District in Maine</i> ● Prep your scratch-made items the day before to help meet scratch-cooking requirements while saving time during breakfast service. — <i>District in New Mexico</i> ● Have the principal greet students each morning and help serve breakfast. One school reported <u>80%</u> breakfast participation since starting this! — <i>District shared at ANC</i>