

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### Getting Started

**O**rchestrating a promotion and outreach strategy seems like a lot of work for a busy Nutrition Services Director to take on! How does a Director motivate those around them to help out?

Start with looking to all the different stakeholder groups in your school community, such as parents, teachers, administrators, students, staff, and community groups. Identify people who could be breakfast champions and work with them to engage the different stakeholders.

It's also important to identify stakeholders that will be critical to the success of the program. Each community is different, but most stakeholder groups appreciate being brought in to the discussions early on, so that their concerns can be addressed.

Work with your breakfast champion and interested stakeholder groups to assess the current state of breakfast: which service model is used, how much participation in SBP, the percentage of students who are low-income.

Identify a school or two that would be a good fit for increasing outreach and promotion efforts. Once there is one school in the district that has a successful promotion strategy, other schools will likely follow along.

### **I am not a marketing expert! How do I start?**

The first step in developing a marketing strategy is defining your objective. For example, if the school community doesn't know about the breakfast program, the objective would be to increase awareness and interest in the program. Other objectives might be working on nutritional quality, highlighting the nutritional benefits of breakfast, or explaining the financial benefits of participating in breakfast to the school and families.

After you have picked the first objective to work on, target the message to the appropriate audiences (students, parents, administrators, teachers, etc...).

USDA FNS has many resources available about developing a marketing strategy available [online](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/expansion/marketing.htm). (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/expansion/marketing.htm>)

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### **Not many people know about school breakfast. How do we increase visibility of our program?**

With any type of program change in a school, it is important to work on changing the school culture. Start talking about the benefits of breakfast (academics & health, and financial benefits to district) at staff meetings, and at parent meetings.

Food tastings for parents, teachers and students are an easy way of soliciting their input and increasing awareness.

When the administrators can make breakfast part of the school day, and the teachers encourage students to eat breakfast, your SBP will have the support it needs to grow and stay strong.

## Resourceful Ideas

### **Why is it so important to track outcomes like attendance, participation, and revenue?**

Tracking outcomes such as changes in participation, revenue, attendance rates and test scores help provide support of the breakfast program and protect the program in tight times.

*Especially now in this time of uncertainty* when many districts are laying off and moving around various school staff inevitably there will be some administrator and teacher changes at your school. Not everyone will always be supportive of the breakfast program for whatever reason and it is then that it is imperative that you have on record the various benefits this program has brought to your campus.

- The more information you have the stronger your case.

These numbers can be helpful to Nutrition Services for evaluating the program so that it can be continually improved.

Tracking outcomes produces numbers that can also help with promoting the program. Parents like to hear that the frequency of tardiness decreased, and the school board appreciates that nutrition services revenue increased with the federal funds that come from increased reimbursements.

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### **W**hat tricks or tips could I take from the commercial food service industry?

School Nutrition Services are often being inspired by strategies used in the food service industry, strategies to help better serve the students (aka, the customers)!

Look at where and how fruit is displayed, or make sure there are staff, teachers or parents who encourage healthy choices. Signs and even music help round out the environment, too.

### **S**tudent Nutrition Advisory Councils (SNACs) or other student health groups are a great way to promote the breakfast program and reach more students. How does a SNAC get started at a school, can it work for all grade levels?

Students and student nutrition clubs can be wonderful partners in helping to make banners/flyers, publicize the competitions, write articles for the school newsletter, assist with taste testing, advocate for better breakfast models, etc. Work with the breakfast champion at your school – a teacher, a health educator, or a parent, to figure out how to best engage the students. There might be an existing club or organization that would be interested in working on breakfast as it relates to many other issues (health, nutrition, money, equity).

### **H**ow do you get high school students to eat? What are some strategies for promoting breakfast in high schools?

In working with high schools that have implemented innovative breakfast programs, we have seen that they have involved the students! Some schools have student wellness advisory boards - those motivated students can help with outreach and promotion of SBP to the rest of the student body. The cafeteria can work with them on the menu planning, and the students can help with media to increase appeal and awareness of school breakfast.

### **H**ow useful could Facebook, Twitter, and other social media be in promotion?

Student groups can use Facebook to help poll their classmates' opinions about when breakfast is served, where it is served and what is served. Use Twitter to announce updates, or new menu items or a competition related to school breakfast. Work with the students to design a campaign that would be meaningful to them.

## Tricky Situations

### **How do you deal with different site administrator's rules regarding food in classrooms?**

Administrators and teachers are often concerned about messes in the classroom. Acknowledge and address their concerns, and work with them to figure out the trash removal system that works best for your campus. Many school sites will have the students return the trash with the perishables to the cafeteria so that it is not left in the classroom. Some campuses have large bins in the hallway – one for every three or four classrooms, that the classrooms can empty their perishables in, so that this type of waste is not left in the classroom. Remember to acknowledge any concerns and work with all stakeholders to find a solution that works for your school or district.

### **How do we decide if we should take offers from the food industry to support our program?**

In these tight times, we know that sometimes resources such as equipment or promotional materials are offered by the food industry. We suggest making sure that these resources align with the district's policies and priorities, and there is no conflict of interest with the breakfast program.

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## Have additional questions?

Please visit [www.BreakfastFirst.org](http://www.BreakfastFirst.org) or contact the BreakfastFirst Team:

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