



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: School Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: February 12, 2015
Subject: Policy Guidance on “Breakfast in the Classroom” and Student Learning Time Requirements

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s student learning time regulations (603 CMR 27) require schools to provide at least 900 hours each year of structured learning time for students at the elementary level and 990 hours at the secondary level. School breakfast time is explicitly excluded from the calculation of structured learning time. When this regulation was adopted twenty years ago, breakfast was typically offered in the traditional cafeteria model. In recent years, breakfast in the classroom has become an increasingly popular service delivery model for school breakfast programs. There is ample evidence that breakfast served in the classroom, after the starting bell, can significantly increase participation rates. We have heard from a number of districts that would like to offer this option if the time can count toward the structured learning time requirement. I am therefore providing this policy guidance to address this situation.

As stated in the regulations, breakfast itself cannot count towards student learning time. However, when instruction is provided during the breakfast period, said instructional time may be used to satisfy the school’s structured learning time requirement, under the following conditions:

- The students must be in a classroom or other separate space conducive to learning, not in the cafeteria or other common space shared with other classes.
- A teacher must be present and actively leading instructional activities.
- No more than fifteen minutes should be allotted for distribution of the breakfast, eating, and cleanup.

We know that hunger is a serious impediment to learning, so I encourage all schools to consider adopting the breakfast in the classroom model as an effective way to ensure that all of our students start the day with a nutritious meal.

Please note that this guidance does not apply to school lunches. A mid-day break is important for students as well as teachers. Lunchtime may not be counted as structured learning time under the regulations, even if lunch is served in the classroom.

The Department's school nutrition office can provide assistance in implementing breakfast in the classroom and can answer any other questions you may have about school meal service. Please visit the Department's [School Breakfast Program webpage](#). For further information, please contact Kathleen Millett at 781-338-6479 or at kmillett@doe.mass.edu.