

# Grab & Go Breakfast

QUICK GUIDE



**Part of the Massachusetts  
After the Bell Toolkit Series**

This resource is brought to you by the Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

# Preface

Approximately 1 in every 8 Massachusetts children is food-insecure.<sup>1</sup> While these children and their families may not be hungry today or even tomorrow, the threat of hunger is a daily reality in their households. Federal nutrition benefits are a critical safety net to help keep these families' budgets in balance and minimize trade-offs between food, housing, medical care, and other critical needs.

For children living in food-insecure households, eating a healthy breakfast at home is often not possible. The National School Breakfast Program (NSBP) is a federally-funded program that helps bridge this gap for families, providing nutritious meals at low or no cost to low-income students at schools throughout the country. According to the Food Research & Action Center's 2015-2016 School Breakfast Scorecard, of the more than 330,000 students in Massachusetts who qualify for free and reduced-price meals, only 49% are eating school breakfast. Starting the day with a nutritious meal is critical for every student—no matter their family's income level.

School breakfast champions here in Massachusetts are making great strides in increasing breakfast participation across the Commonwealth. Participation among students eligible for free or reduced-price meals rose by 15% from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year alone. Together, we can ensure that all students in the state have access to nutritious meals that help them learn and thrive.

<sup>1</sup> Feeding America, 2018

## About the Child Nutrition Outreach Program

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) works with local districts, schools, and communities across the state to increase participation in the National School Breakfast Program. Administered by Project Bread since 1994, CNOP provides technical assistance and innovative solutions to support schools implementing and expanding school breakfast programs. Together, we strive to ensure that all children in Massachusetts start the school day nourished and ready to learn.

This quick guide, presented by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread, is intended to assist school nutrition directors and other breakfast advocates in launching and implementing Grab & Go Breakfast in order to increase participation in school breakfast. The Grab & Go Quick Guide is part of a series of quick guides designed to help with the implementation of alternative breakfast models including Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab & Go, and Second Chance Breakfast. View the entire series at [www.meals4kids.org/resources](http://www.meals4kids.org/resources).

For additional resources and technical support, please contact the CNOP team at [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org) or (617) 723-5000.

# Massachusetts School Breakfast Challenge

The Massachusetts School Breakfast Challenge partners are challenging schools to increase student participation in school breakfast by October 2020. Schools are encouraged to increase their breakfast participation to reach Challenge goals corresponding to the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Schools achieving these participation goals will be recognized and eligible for awards.

## challenge group 1

**Schools where 60% or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve an 80% or higher student participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for school breakfast after the bell and in the classroom.

## challenge group 2

**Schools where 30-59% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve a 50% or higher student participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for an alternative school breakfast after the bell model.

## challenge group 3

**Schools where 29% or less of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**

GOAL:

All schools achieve a 25% or higher participation rate.

Note: Schools should strive for an active school breakfast program.

Visit [www.maschoolbreakfast.org](http://www.maschoolbreakfast.org) for future announcements regarding breakfast trainings, funding, and networking opportunities.

# What is Grab & Go Breakfast?

In a Grab & Go Breakfast model, students can pick up breakfast from serving carts or kiosks located in easily accessible locations in the school—often at entrances or other high-traffic areas. Many schools choose Grab & Go because of the flexibility of location, time, and food selection that this model allows. Breakfast can be served as students enter the building before classes begin or between classes later in the morning, which can be an attractive option for older students. Schools determine where breakfast can be consumed, in locations such as playgrounds, hallways, the cafeteria, and classrooms. Breakfast menus are designed for students on the go, with prepackaged items allowing students to easily eat outside the cafeteria or save breakfast for when they are hungry.

## G&G BENEFITS

- 1** Grab & Go works well for schools that do not have the ability to deliver breakfast to each classroom due to conflicting class schedules or infrastructure obstacles. Instead, meals are delivered to a few key locations that are convenient both for students and for school nutrition staff.
- 2** This model is the most flexible in terms of service time and location, which makes it a good choice for schools that serve a large number of students.
- 3** Serving breakfast in high-traffic areas rather than the cafeteria increases accessibility, reduces serving time, and often results in increased breakfast participation.
- 4** Grab & Go Breakfast often works well for middle and high school students because older students enjoy the flexibility and choice this model provides. Students can select a clear bag at the beginning of the line and easily choose from the items available to create a reimbursable breakfast, which food service staff can easily check while maintaining the offer versus serve mandate for high schools.
- 5** In the Grab & Go model, school nutrition staff retains the meal counting responsibility, ensuring more accurate meal counts with less administrative burden than Breakfast in the Classroom.
- 6** Older students may not be hungry first thing in the morning and may prefer to eat later. This model can be effective in providing a quick second chance breakfast opportunity later in the morning in addition to when students first enter the building.

## Building a School Breakfast Coalition

Creating a coalition of supporters for Grab & Go is the first step in successfully implementing a school breakfast change. Principals and superintendents are key champions as part of the coalition, but you should also consider the perspectives that teachers, custodians, school nurses, parents, and students themselves will offer in the planning process.

When presenting the plan to teachers and other staff, make sure you are listening to their concerns and presenting answers and solutions as part of their training. If you are able to involve other stakeholders in the planning process and incorporate ways to ease their concerns as well, you are less likely to face resistance down the road.

For further assistance with building your school breakfast coalition and communicating key messages to the various stakeholders, check out the resources accompanying this guide at [www.meals4kids.org/GnG](http://www.meals4kids.org/GnG).

# Grab & Go Breakfast Implementation Timeline

3-4 months  
prior to  
rollout

- Contact a member of the Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) team to set up a meeting by sending an email to [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org).
- Visit a successful Grab & Go Breakfast program at another school. Speak with the staff members there about the challenges they faced and how they overcame them.
- Present the case and initial plan to the principal and superintendent. Invite them to provide feedback and contribute to the plan.
- Meet with school nutrition staff to determine any equipment and storage needs (kiosks, coolers, refrigerators, etc.) and apply for grants if necessary.
- Do a walkthrough of the building to determine best location(s) for a cart and any additional storage locations needed to increase efficiency.

2-3 months  
prior

- Check in with the CNOP team to discuss any outstanding questions.
- Schedule a meeting with the principal, teachers, custodians, nurses, school nutrition staff, and student representatives to discuss the model change.
- Work with this group to develop guidelines outlining where students will pick up their breakfast and when and where they can eat it.
- Meet with the custodial staff to discuss a waste removal plan and cleaning routine.
- Schedule training meetings for school nutrition staff about a plan for point of service procedures.
- Schedule an announcement at the next PTA-PTO meeting or Parent-Teacher Night.

4-6 weeks  
prior

- Order supplies for the areas where food will be consumed (trash bags, additional waste bins, disinfectant wipes, etc.).
- Send a letter home to parents informing them about the new way breakfast is being served, including the menu, times, and prices. Sample letters can be found at [www.meals4kids.org/GnG](http://www.meals4kids.org/GnG).
- Explain the model change to students, including expectations for proper disposal of trash and any limitations on where food can be eaten.

2-3 weeks  
prior

- Finalize the waste removal plan with custodial staff.
- Conduct trainings for school nutrition staff regarding compliance concerns and meal counting. Refer to ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook for more information.
- Engage with student representatives to help remind students about the start of the program and expectations. Develop signage or posters that explain the guidelines, including where and when students can eat breakfast.

1 week  
prior

- Remind parents about the new Grab & Go program by sending home a flyer or using the school's phone/texting system.
- Check in with teachers and staff to answer any outstanding questions.

1 day  
prior

- Remind the students about the change over the morning announcements.

1 week  
after  
rollout

- Continue to plan evaluation meetings with staff involved and make necessary changes to the program.

# How it

1

## PREP

School nutrition staff prepare breakfast for the students that is easy to consume on the go. Elementary and middle schools may choose to have school nutrition staff pre-package complete reimbursable meals for students to take.



2

## DELIVER

About 10 minutes before service starts, move the serving carts or kiosks to their stations in high-traffic areas of the school. Be sure to provide adequate means to store and serve perishable items to maintain proper temperatures.



3

## DISTRIBUTE

Use a wireless point of service device to keep track of which students eat breakfast. Schools operating CEP or Universal Breakfast should consult ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook to read more about their options for meal counting and claiming.



# Works

5

## EAT

Students can consume breakfast in the cafeteria, hallways, classrooms, or other settings that work for your school.



6

## CLEAN UP

Place additional waste and recycling bins in designated locations where students are allowed to consume breakfast. If students are allowed to eat breakfast in their classrooms during the beginning of class, place the classroom trash in the hallways for the custodial staff to pick up during the first few periods of the day.



7

## BREAK DOWN

If you begin serving Grab & Go before the start of school, stay 5-10 minutes after the bell to allow late students to pick up breakfast. After that time, return the meals to the cafeteria and move the serving carts to their storage location if necessary.



# Healthy Menu Planning

Offering fresh, healthy Grab & Go meals can seem logistically challenging. To assist you in offering the most nutritious breakfast options to your students, we have developed a one-week cycle menu that focuses on healthy breakfast options that can be used in alternative breakfast models. This cycle menu adheres to USDA regulations—promoting fresh fruit and whole grain-rich products—and offers recipes that students will want to eat.

We recognize that budgets vary across districts and factored total cost into our choices. We hope you will find this to be a useful guide for offering financially viable, healthy menu options for Grab & Go Breakfast.

## MONDAY

- Assorted Cereals (2 oz = 2G)
- **BONUS: Cheese Stick (1 oz = 1MA)**
- Banana (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## TUESDAY

- Breakfast Sandwich (2 oz = 2M/MA, 1-2 oz = 1-2G)
- Seasonal Fresh Fruit (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## WEDNESDAY

- Breakfast Bar / English Muffin (1 oz = 1G)\*
- Sunflower Seeds (1 oz = 1MA)
- Sliced Apple w/ Cinnamon (1 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## THURSDAY

- Whole Grain Pancakes (2.4 oz = 2G)
- **BONUS: Hard-boiled Egg (1 Medium Egg = 1MA)**
- Fruit Puree or Fresh Fruit (1 cup = 1F)
- **BONUS: Syrup (1oz PC)**
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## FRIDAY

- Granola (1/4 cup or 1 oz = 1G)
- Greek Yogurt (4 oz = 1MA)
- Raisins (1/2 cup = 1F)
- 1% or Skim Milk-Plain (1 cup = 1 Milk)

## ALTERNATIVE BREAKFAST MENU

\*Breakfast Bar oz eq will vary per product.

For more Grab & Go Breakfast sample menus, recipes, and product lists, please consult Project Bread's Let's Prepare Healthy School Breakfast toolkit:

[www.projectbread.org/healthymenus](http://www.projectbread.org/healthymenus).



# Community Profile

## Athol-Royalston Middle School

Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, Athol-Royalston Middle School offered breakfast in the cafeteria before school, reaching just 25% of the student population. At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the middle school implemented Grab & Go Breakfast, allowing students to pick up their school breakfast from kiosks in the hallways before school and eat on their way to class or at their seats during the beginning of class. Since implementing this new model, the school has reached 64% breakfast participation, and 250 students are now eating a nutritious breakfast at school each morning—compared to just 97 previously.



State Senator Anne Gobi and State Representative Susannah Whipps visited Athol-Royalston Middle School in December 2017 to observe the Grab & Go Breakfast program.

In September 2017, the school nutrition director for the Athol-Royalston Regional School District contacted Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) about implementing an alternative breakfast model at the middle school that would expand access to breakfast and boost participation in the program. The CNOP team consulted on this project and helped the middle school launch the Grab & Go model, offering breakfast at four kiosks located conveniently throughout the school.

For students who do not have the time or household income necessary to eat before arriving at school, school breakfast provides an excellent opportunity to start the day with a healthy morning meal. At Athol-Royalston Middle School, 90% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Since the school began offering a more accessible breakfast option, many more of these students are now starting their days with a healthy breakfast. "Breakfast fuels kids," said Superintendent Darcy Fernandez. "It's just that simple and it makes a difference in the classroom. Ultimately, our kids are more energized, they are able to focus, and they are prepared for a day of learning."

# FAQs: Grab & Go

**Q:** Will school nutrition staff spend more time packaging breakfasts for the Grab & Go model?

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**A:** School nutrition staff can prepare most of the meals the day before. This can actually take less preparation time in the morning compared to serving breakfast in the cafeteria. High schools do not pre-package breakfasts for students, as they are mandated to follow offer versus serve. For more information about this, consult ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook to ensure compliance. Regardless of whether schools choose to serve a complete pre-packaged breakfast or choose the offer versus serve model, all schools should take into consideration the need for extra staff to operate the serving kiosks or carts.

**Q:** Will it be difficult to keep track of which students take breakfast if we are serving meals out of stations or kiosks rather than in the cafeteria or the classroom?

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**A:** By using a wireless point of sale application through your current provider, students enter their pin after the nutrition staff has confirmed they took a reimbursable breakfast. If you find that there are too many students taking breakfast at once and it is difficult to keep track of each student, consider adding an additional serving cart at another high-traffic area in the school such as an entrance or outside the area where students congregate before school starts. Schools operating CEP or Universal Breakfast should consult ESE's School Breakfast Program Integrity Guidebook to read more about their options for meal counting and claiming.

**Q:** Will trash removal become a burden on custodial staff?

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**A:** No. Good planning and engaging school stakeholders in the process leads to a smooth transition. Engaging the custodial staff in the change can result in an exchange of one custodial duty for another rather than adding an additional burden. Custodians swap out cleaning the cafeteria after breakfast service for picking up trash barrels around the school.

Engaging students in setting and implementing the school's expectations for cleanup can ease the transition process as well. By making students aware of the clean-up process and placing trash cans in areas where they will be eating, students can take care of the bulk of cleanup. If students are allowed to bring breakfast to their classrooms to consume during the beginning of class, all

classroom trash should be placed in heavy-duty bags and left outside in the hallway for custodians to pick up within the first couple periods of the day. This creates an efficient system, usually with less work for custodial staff. If your school is concerned about cleanliness throughout the school, consider asking students to eat in one or two designated locations.

Will our breakfast model be limited by serving breakfast on the go rather than in the classroom or in a cafeteria? How should I address the concerns of parents who think this on-the-go food might not be as healthy?

**Q:**

**A:**

One concern with serving breakfast on the go is that school nutrition staff will have fewer healthy menu options that are portable and can be easily consumed on the go. For this reason, Project Bread Chefs have developed “Let’s Prepare Healthy School Breakfast,” a menu planning tool complete with healthy, budget-friendly breakfast recipes for schools serving breakfast using alternative models.

It is important to present nutritional information to parents, as they may be unaware that food served at school must meet federal nutritional guidelines. Provide samples of your school’s breakfast food at parent meetings and be open to any recommendations that parents may have. This will allow parents to feel more confident in the food being served to their children. As you strive to offer the most nutritious options to your students, look for items that are low in sugar and sodium, as well as high in dietary fiber.

## Conclusion

We hope this quick guide will be a helpful ongoing resource to assist you in launching Grab & Go Breakfast. While the information and resources provided here will give you many of the tools you need, we know that operating a school breakfast program is a multi-faceted endeavor. CNOP can help! Our expertise gained from more than 20 years of experience can provide you with the guidance needed to increase participation in your program and overcome any challenges that you may encounter. Together, we can make sure all children in Massachusetts are prepared to succeed—starting with a healthy school breakfast.

Along with this quick guide, you can find a multitude of resources on our website that will help you implement Grab & Go Breakfast successfully: [www.meals4kids.org/GnG](http://www.meals4kids.org/GnG).



If you have any questions, or if you would like to speak with someone on the CNOP team regarding your breakfast program, contact us by email at [cnop@projectbread.org](mailto:cnop@projectbread.org), or by phone at (617) 723-5000.

