



## 'BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM' MYTHS

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but too many hungry kids in the U.S. miss a morning meal. Schools that offer breakfast in the classroom at the start of each day are able to provide more kids with the healthy food they need to learn. Despite a growing trend of schools successfully making breakfast part of the school day and seeing improved academic and behavioral outcomes, some myths persist.

### 1. IT TAKES AWAY FROM INSTRUCTIONAL TIME.

Teachers say that, on average, breakfast in the classroom **takes about 15 minutes**.<sup>1</sup> Teachers spend that time constructively on classroom activities. Some teachers report they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer disruptions such as visits to the school nurse, tardiness, and absenteeism.

#### What Do Teachers Do During Breakfast Time?

76% Say they take attendance

65% Say they read classroom announcements

42% Collect homework assignments



### 2. IT PLACES AN UNNECESSARY BURDEN ON TEACHERS.

Two out of three educators whose students eat breakfast in the classroom are fans of the program. Teachers find that with clear procedures, breakfast can take less than 15 minutes, **has a calming effect and sets a positive learning atmosphere.**

“At first I was a little skeptical, mostly because of the logistics. And, you now, it’s an old building. So I said I’d start a pilot program just with the sixth-graders. Last year we started it, and I said that if it’s successful then I’ll branch it out. Now I’m doing this across all my grades. It’s such a good opportunity for all of our students, to get them on the right track.”

- PRINCIPAL, NEW YORK CITY

### 3. IT MAKES A MESS.

Many teachers and principals say that any mess or trash issues can be overcome with a smart system. It might take some tries to get that system right, but at the end of the day, it's worth trying. Some schools work with janitorial staff to set up a simple system for trash collection after breakfast, others explore whole meal food options that do not use a lot of syrup or assembly. When students and staff are trained to properly dispose of breakfast items, breakfast is a simple and clean experience.

“Before the program started, I said there would be five spills a day. That first month, I don't think there were five spills total.”

— CUSTODIAN, NEW YORK



### 4. THE FOOD IS UNHEALTHY.

All school meals must meet federal requirements, as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Decisions about which specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made at the local level, but all school breakfasts must include a whole grain; fruit, vegetable or 100% juice; and milk. School breakfast must provide  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and there are tight restrictions on calories, saturated fats and sodium.<sup>2</sup>

### 5. KIDS WILL EAT TWICE OR TOO MUCH

A 2015 study by health professionals published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics concluded that breakfast in the classroom was not associated with an increase in calorie intake at breakfast time or throughout the day. However, the policy definitely led to more kids getting breakfast.<sup>3</sup>

“The breakfast in the classroom group had higher overall diet quality. No evidence was found to support discontinuation of breakfast in the classroom policy on the basis of concerns that children will eat excess calories.”

– 2015 NUTRITION STUDY

1 Hunger in our School. [http://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/NKH\\_TeachersReport\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/NKH_TeachersReport_2013.pdf)

2 USDA Guidelines; <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP45-2013os.pdf>

3 School Breakfast Policy Is Associated with Dietary Intake of Fourth and Fifth-Grade Students, 2015. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.