January 2017
School Nutrition Industry Conference,
Orlando, FL
Introduction

WHEN BREAKFAST MOVES from the traditional cafeteria to a grab and go or direct delivery model, participation increases. An increase in participation translates to more students starting their school day ready to learn. Transitioning to these models creates community in the classroom and children are able to start their school day with access to the morning meal. Stigma is removed, late buses don’t matter, fewer trips to the school nurse occur, and kids exhibit better behavior.

However, getting to that scene is NOT WITHOUT CHALLENGES. Labor, equipment, storage, food safety and quality are just the tip of the iceberg.

Overview

Sarah Murphy Youssef, program manager at the School Nutrition Foundation, and Liz Campbell, a nutrition consultant, led a bonus session at the 2017 School Nutrition Industry Conference (SNIC) focused on Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC).

The purpose of this session was to identify challenges in implementing breakfast in the classroom—specifically challenges related to food and equipment—and to share ideas and effective solutions for addressing these challenges. Participants engaged in interactive roundtable discussions, report outs, and brainstorming. This resulted in suggested action items for industry, child nutrition operators, and allied groups to support the successful expansion of Breakfast in the Classroom.

This document summarizes the key information from this session.

Background

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (PBIC) initiative goes back to 2010, when grants were first awarded to school districts. This initiative is generously funded by the Walmart Foundation. The national partners who make up the PBIC (see Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom for technical assistance videos and additional information) have a shared passion for child nutrition and its potential to improve educational outcomes and child health. The national organizations that comprise the Partners are:

- School Nutrition Foundation, which works closely with school nutrition operators
- The NEA Foundation, which works with teachers and school building staff to help ensure stakeholder buy-in
- Food Research & Action Center, which brings community and grassroots anti-hunger advocates on board
- National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation, which helps connect and create buy-in with principals
Since 2010, the Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom initiative has involved three cycles:

- **Cycle 1**: Breakfast in the Classroom grants were awarded to 5 districts
- **Cycle 2**: 10 districts were awarded funds to transition to a BIC model
- **Cycle 3**: PBIC moved to a state approach and have scaled up to award 21 districts in our 7 target states
- **Cycle 4** has launched and runs through December 2018. Grants are available to schools and districts in 10 target states (Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah). Eligibility criteria, the RFP, and the application can be found at [www.breakfastintheclassroom.org](http://www.breakfastintheclassroom.org).

### Who Was in the Session?

Real-time polling provided information about where attendees work, their experience in school nutrition, and their familiarity with Breakfast in the Classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Category Best Describes Where You Work?</th>
<th>How Long Have You Worked in School Nutrition?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Company</td>
<td>1 - 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment or Software Company</td>
<td>6 - 10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Agency or USDA</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Category Best Describes Where You Work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know about it. I am looking to share challenges and get help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know very little about Breakfast in the Classroom and am here to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about it and am here to share my expertise.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Breakfast in the Classroom Challenges and Solutions

In roundtable discussions and then report outs, participants identified challenges and solutions related to food, equipment, and technology. These challenges and solutions are described below.

**Food Challenges and Solutions**

The word cloud below lists Breakfast in the Classroom food challenges mentioned and shows the weighting of the challenges.

Solutions were identified during the convening and compiled from best practices through the PBIC project.

"YOU HAVE TO MARRY FINDING FOOD THAT KIDS WILL EAT WITH WHAT WE CAN GET OUT IN TIME."

"YOU HAVE TO KEEP CHANGING MENUS."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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| **Menu variety.** The challenge is finding food items students like and will eat that are within the meal pattern standards and within the child nutrition department budget. | • The development of more desirable food items that are palatable, affordable, transport well, and are not high in sugar.  
• Engage stakeholders to consider the feasibility of breakfast buffet (i.e. through the cafeteria or portable kiosks) in a school building so that children are being offered a larger variety through the breakfast in the classroom program. |
| **Menu likeability.** The challenge is knowing your customer preferences and finding the best menu solution to maximize participation. | • Use data from production sheets and counting and claiming to identify the most popular items per school building in order to forecast menu development.  
• Consider hosting a food show for students in order to solicit their feedback on new menu items.  
• Survey and engage students on a variety of topics including but not limited to: menu preferences, recipe development, and marketing strategies. |
| **Food quality and packaging.** The challenge is maintaining food quality and integrity outside of the cafeteria. For example, finding packaging to keep food at the appropriate temperature. | • Examples of hot items that transport well outside of the cafeteria are: eggs, breakfast pizzas, mini pancakes, and breakfast burritos.  
• Examples of other popular food items for breakfast in the classroom models that are transported and consumed easily are: cold wraps, peanut butter and jelly products, yogurt, yogurt parfaits, and smoothies.  
• Similar to cold packs, there are hot packs available for transportation in insulated food bags that are now relatively inexpensive.  
• A popular packaging solution is bento boxes, which mimic the trend in the retail market. |
| **Timely delivery.** The challenge is getting students and food to the classroom safely and efficiently. | • The best practice is for the school nutrition director to engage with all stakeholders (i.e. teachers, principal, custodian, kitchen staff, dean of students, and nurse) to develop a plan prior to implementation in each school building. |
| **Cleanliness of classroom.** The challenge is addressing the teacher and custodial concerns that it will be difficult to maintain classroom cleanliness. | • A best practice is to engage stakeholder concerns and develop classroom protocol about student expectations in maintaining classroom cleanliness.  
• An example of what has worked in many schools are: foil food wraps and grab n go bags that can be used as placemats to keep food off of desk and collect trash at the end of meal time.  
• Another example is working with stakeholders to identify menu items that are popular with students and work best in the classroom like pancakes with syrup infused and milk cartons with straw holes. |
| **Leftovers.** The challenge of direct delivery breakfast in the classroom models is forecasting the number of meals needed in the classroom daily to avoid waste. | • Be sure to engage your most important stakeholders (students) to identify meal preferences.  
• Some programs allow students to pre-order meals through a number of ways. For example, mobile applications or teachers collecting orders and submitting through a Google survey or a sheet of paper.  
• Some programs have shifted away from direct delivery to a grab ‘n go model which allows for child nutrition staff to control counting and claiming and food safety of leftovers. |
| **Teacher modeling.** The challenge is students often look to their teachers to model behaviors. If the teacher does not eat or doesn’t like the food it can impact participation. | • A best practice is to train teachers in advance of implementation about the merits of the program and their vital role in its success.  
• Some districts provide free breakfasts for teachers who help administer the program. Check with your state agency director to see if this is a viable option. Or consider paying for teacher meals from the child nutrition budget or district’s general fund. |
| **Procurement.** The challenge to small and rural districts is that it can be cost prohibitive to acquire the most popular BIC menu items because of the scale of the order needed, the storage capacity of the district, or the delivery options available. | • Some districts have worked together to establish rural purchasing cooperatives that help reduce price per item cost and delivery challenges. |
Equipment and Technology Challenges and Solutions

The word cloud below lists Breakfast in the Classroom equipment and technology challenges mentioned and shows the weighting of the challenges.

“THE MAIN CHALLENGE IS TO FIND ACCEPTABLE ITEMS WITHIN THE COST PROFILE THAT STUDENTS WILL LOVE.”

Solutions were identified during the convening and compiled from best practices through the PBIC project.

<table>
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| **Inventory storage.**  The challenge is that transitioning to BIC can drastically increase participation, which impacts inventory storage needs. | • One suggestion is to work with a storage or equipment consultant who can analyze, reconfigure, and maximize space. One participant gained 40% additional storage through that process.  
• A best practice is to review delivery schedules to maximize the number of deliveries to reduce the amount of storage needed.  
• Some districts have purchased portable walk-in freezers and coolers in order to add space without the cost of renovations.  
• Some districts consider participation increase and the subsequent increased revenue when determining options for additional storage and equipment. |
| **Equipment storage.** When transitioning to direct delivery or grab n’ go model, new equipment is needed such as a service cart for insulated bags or kiosks. This equipment needs to be stored and depending on the size of the new pieces can cause storage challenges. For example, grab n’ go kiosks | • Desire was expressed for appealing looking kiosks that can be easily collapsed for daily storage.  
• Work with administrators to identify space throughout the school building available for storage not traditionally utilized for food service such as behind a stairwell.  
• Consider purchasing portable storage units. |
| **Transportation.** Distributing breakfast to classrooms can be a challenge depending on the layout of the school building and time frame for service. Carts and kiosks need to be easy to push and need to fit in hallways. Elevator size and reliability are also a challenge. | • Mobile kiosks make it easier to transport food.  
• One participant mentioned motorized kiosks and utility carts, which can accommodate a larger load and cover more terrain.  
• Be sure to identify the appropriate number of staff needed to execute service within the designated time frame.  
• Assess size and capacity of all carts, storage areas, elevators, door-frames, and hallways where food will be transported or stored to be sure that equipment is congruent with the school building. |
| **Counting and claiming.** The challenge is establishing reliable and accurate methods of counting and claiming. | • Use technology for counting and claiming such as finger imaging, portable point of sale pin pads, or ipads.  
• Other solutions include using cards that can be distributed and collected at point of sale or using reusable rosters.  
• The key is before implementation to train all staff, including teachers, who are assisting in counting and claiming to understand the importance of the data collection. |
| **Communication.** Participants noted that there is not a good day-to-day electronic platform for industry and child nutrition directors to share needs and possible solutions around breakfast in the classroom. | • Participants strongly suggested the development of an online, non-commercial forum where operators could ask questions and share ideas and industry members could help provide solutions. |
Action Items and Recommendations
In concluding this session, participants were asked for their top action items for child nutrition operators to expand Breakfast in the Classroom, for industry to work on in supporting Breakfast in the Classroom, and for other organizations—including the School Nutrition Foundation, USDA, state agencies, and other allied groups—to support the expansion of Breakfast in the Classroom. The top actions (those mentioned three or more times in rank order) were:

**Actions for Child Nutrition Operators:**
1. Secure **buy-in and support** from parents, teachers, and administration through marketing, education, and training.
2. Conduct **pilots** in one classroom or in one school to show that BIC works and to develop champions.
3. Increase **funding** for BIC by applying for grants and thinking creatively and efficiently. Continue to monitor performance of BIC program and popularity of BIC menu items to keep programs financially healthy.

**Actions for Industry:**
1. **Storage.** Develop and support creative storage solutions and organizational systems.
2. **Packaging.** This includes consistent, standardized case sizes from all manufacturers; labeling; improved packaging; and packaging innovation.
3. **Quality.** Comments included developing more flavorful, quality food products.
4. **Variety.** Industry can continue to work on greater choices and varieties of food products.
5. **Marketing.** Industry can support BIC by marketing breakfast as “cool” and providing tools to market breakfast in the classroom.
6. **Nutritional** information. Industry can provide easy access to nutritional information.
7. **Affordability.** Industry can provide more affordable pricing, especially for pre-packaging.

**Actions by National Organizations**
1. **Grants and funding.** Participants want to see simplified, streamlined grant writing for breakfast and equipment grants, and want support and training on grant writing.
2. **Resources, forums, and information sharing.** Participants would like access to more resources, and want more forums and information sharing. An example is helpful guides to sell BIC to the administration. Email listserv, mealtalk resurrected, software platform.
3. **Making breakfast universal and free.** Several participants want to see organizations support universal breakfast for all students.
Thank you to the participants who contributed to the conversation at the 2017 School Nutrition Industry Conference around Breakfast in the Classroom.

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