School Breakfast Programs
Myth vs. Fact
What parents should know

MYTH #1: School breakfast is only for children of low-income families
FACT: Breakfast benefits everyone! All children, regardless of socioeconomic status, need access to a nutritious meal to start their day. While participating in a school breakfast program may help limited-income families stretch their resources, all students may participate in the school breakfast program if their school offers it.

MYTH #2: If I manage to feed my child at home, others can, too.
FACT: Parents who choose to have their children eat breakfast at school are responsible parents! They are ensuring that their children have access to breakfast elsewhere, if breakfast at home is missed. The busy lifestyles of many families often means breakfast is rushed or skipped at home. Indeed, many parents and students alike cite that a lack of time in the morning is one of the top reasons for skipping breakfast at home. In addition, many children report not feeling hungry first thing in the morning, but have a better appetite later in the morning. Bus and commuting schedules may also interfere with children being fed at home. Having breakfast at school would provide these students with the morning nutrition they need to start their day.

MYTH #3: Breakfast isn’t really that important.
FACT: Research shows that children who eat breakfast perform better in school, visit the school nurse and are absent from school less often, have a decreased risk of being overweight, eat higher quality diets, and have better behavior. The benefits of eating breakfast abound and the link between successful academic performance and consistent breakfast consumption is strong.

MYTH #4: School breakfast, especially breakfast in the classroom, is disruptive and takes away valuable teaching time.
FACT: Breakfast in the classroom has proven to be a successful model in many schools across the nation. Some teachers report they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer disruptions such as visits to the school nurse, tardiness, and absenteeism. In addition, teachers report that the quality of instruction improves when students eat breakfast because
the children are more alert and ready to learn. Breakfast can be incorporated into the learning process with lessons in health, science, social studies and math. Teachers can go about their morning routine while the students are eating breakfast at their desks. Other types of school breakfast models, such as Grab 'n Go, have been incorporated into the school's existing morning break or homeroom activities, such as when school announcements are made. In short, school breakfast enhances a student’s ability to learn with little or no loss of instructional time.

**MYTH #5: Skipping breakfast promotes weight loss.**

**FACT:** In fact, the opposite is true! Research shows that both adults and children who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight. One of the common denominators in people who have lost weight and successfully maintained their weight loss is that they eat breakfast every day! When you skip breakfast, you feel hungrier later on in the day and tend to overeat at the next meal.

**MYTH #6: School breakfast isn’t healthy.**

**FACT:** By law, schools receiving federal meal reimbursement must serve a breakfast that meets national nutrition guidelines. School breakfasts can supply no more than 30% of calories from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat. One-fourth of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and calories must be provided by school breakfast. On average, students who participate in a school meal program benefit from higher intakes of many nutrients such as calcium, vitamin A and others. Compared with non-participants, children who eat breakfast at school typically have a lower intake of added sugars. Some menu choices that might be perceived as “unhealthy” may actually be prepared with low-fat ingredients or whole grains, or are served with fruit or vegetables to provide a nutritious, balanced meal.

**MYTH #7: The school breakfast menus are planned without my input.**

**FACT:** Many school foodservice directors welcome ideas and suggestions from a variety of sources. Become an advocate for the students and voice what you think should be offered on school menus. Visit the cafeteria, talk to the foodservice director and ask how you can help. Since child nutrition programs have to follow strict federal and state guidelines, working with the school to understand the requirements necessary for the program to be in compliance is crucial for efficient collaborative work. In addition, many schools have wellness committees that provided input regarding what is served at school.
MYTH #8: If I wait long enough, someone else will advocate starting a breakfast program at my child’s school.

FACT: Why wait? Schools receive both federal and state reimbursements for breakfast, which may represent additional revenue for the school. Implementing a successful breakfast program requires a team effort. It’s important for parents, teachers, principals, administrators, the school’s wellness committee, the custodial and food service staff to communicate with each other so that everyone’s needs and concerns can be addressed. Starting a program takes time and careful planning, beginning with a needs assessment of the school to ensure all aspects of implementing a breakfast program are addressed.

MYTH #9: My child eats breakfast at home, why should I support a school breakfast program in my child’s school?

FACT: A school caters to children from different types of households including different socio-economic status, family composition, working-parent schedules, etc. Many families, regardless of household income, report school mornings as the most stressful time of the day. Busy lifestyles, work, school and bus schedules, children’s varying appetites and availability of food at home are some reasons why some students do not eat breakfast at home. While your child may have had breakfast at home, perhaps some of his classmates have not. A classroom with hungry children tends to experience less academic success and have more distractions. Classroom dynamics affects all students in that classroom. By supporting a school breakfast program in your child’s school you are helping all students have access to a nutritious meal in the morning so they are all ready to learn including your child.