

INTRODUCTION

Breakfast is widely considered the most important meal of the day, for reasons backed up by a wealth of scientific evidence demonstrating the health benefits of a nutritious morning meal. The word “breakfast” refers literally to the act of breaking the metabolic “fast” that occurs overnight while a person is sleeping. Eating a well-rounded meal shortly after waking jumpstarts a person’s metabolism and provides much-needed energy for the rest of the day. In addition, the benefits of a nutritious breakfast go beyond an individual morning—research shows that regular breakfast-eaters are more likely to maintain a healthy weight¹ and consume more nutrients² than those who eat breakfast rarely or never.

**“BREAKFAST”
REFERS LITERALLY
TO THE ACT
OF BREAKING THE
METABOLIC “FAST”**

Eating breakfast in the morning is especially important for children and adolescents, who are still growing both physically and mentally. Nutritious breakfast habits have been shown to enhance student success, both in and out of the school setting. Eating breakfast can contribute to improvements in math, reading, and standardized test scores³ and enhanced memory and focus in the classroom.⁴ Children who eat breakfast are more likely than those who do not to be physically active and have a higher fitness level.⁵ In addition, regularly eating breakfast as a child or adolescent also can help to establish this healthful habit for later in life during adulthood. Despite this, it is estimated that 14% of adolescents in the U.S. do not eat breakfast every day, with teens from lower-income and nonwhite families more likely to skip their morning meal.¹

SCHOOL BREAKFAST IS AVAILABLE AT HIGH SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE.

Because of the National School Breakfast Program (NSBP), breakfast at school is widely available for students at little to no cost to families throughout the United States. Participation in school breakfast benefits families in many ways, like ensuring that a child receives a healthful meal that meets federally-mandated nutrition standards and helping to cut down on stress in the morning as parents juggle multiple demands to get their children ready for the school day.

However, rates of participation in school breakfast are low both nationally and in the state of Iowa. On an average day during the 2011-2012 school year, only 12.5 million children in the U.S. participated in school breakfast—and of these children, 84% received their breakfast free or at reduced-cost.⁶ Iowa in particular has low rates of school breakfast participation, ranking 47th out of 50 states.⁶ During the 2011-2012 school year, over 80% of students did not participate in school breakfast⁷-- compared with only 21% of students in Iowa who did not eat school lunch.⁷

¹ Timlin, M., Pereira, M., Story, M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2008). Breakfast eating and weight change in a 5-year prospective analysis of adolescents: Project EAT (Eating Among Teens). *Pediatrics*, 121, e638-645.

² Min, C. et al. (2011). Skipping breakfast is associated with diet quality and metabolic syndrome risk factors of adults. *Nutrition Research and Practice*, 5(5), 455-463.

³ Rampersaud, G.C., Pereira, M., Girard, P., Adams, J., Metz, J. (2005). Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 105(5), 743-60.

⁴ Wesnes, K.A., Pincock, C., Richardson, D., Helm, G., & Hails, S. (2003). Breakfast reduces declines in attention and memory over the morning in schoolchildren. *Appetite*, 41(3), 329-331.

⁵ Sandercock G., Voss, C., Dye, L. (2010). Associations between habitual school-day breakfast consumption, body mass index, physical activity and cardiorespiratory fitness in English schoolchildren. *Eur. J. Clin. Nutr.* 64, 1086-1092

⁶ Food Resource and Action Center. (2013). *Child nutrition fact sheet: School Breakfast Program*. Retrieved from http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/school_breakfast_program_fact_sheet.pdf

School meals participation in Iowa, 2011-2012⁷

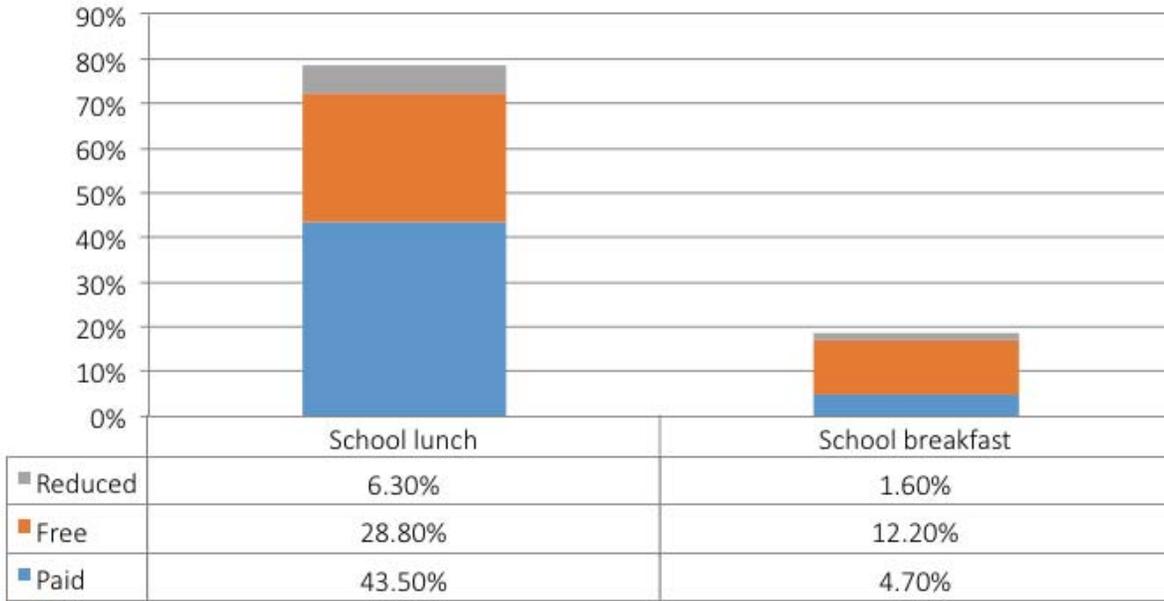
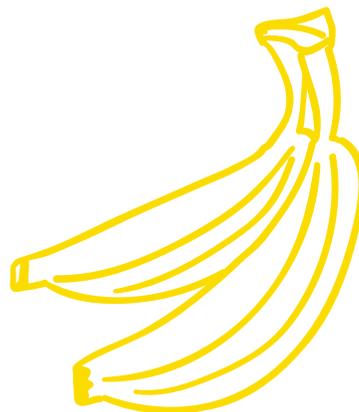


Table 1 Percentage of Iowa students participating in school lunch versus school breakfast by paid, reduced, and free participation, 2011-2012 school year school year.



⁷ School Nutrition Association Iowa. (2013, March 5). *Iowa Child Nutrition Programs Annual Report*.