

Meeting 1: Introduction to the importance of breakfast, information about school breakfast, brainstorming about barriers, motivators and benefits to school breakfast, and discussion about other information needed.

Meeting 2: Ranking and pile sorting for brainstormed lists of barriers, motivators, and benefits and discussion of what channel to use to communicate more effectively with their peers.

Meeting 3: Brainstorming Twitter options, discussion of types of breakfast food students would enjoy, and discussion of ways to advertise school breakfast in the school.

Meeting 4: Responding to visuals and brainstormed list of tweets.

Each of the schools conducted activities related to school breakfast. Some students developed an online survey, others put together advertising and marketing plans, some developed their own Twitter campaigns with a pre-formed tweet for each school day, and a few students designed a video promoting school breakfast.

BEST PRACTICES

The following recommendations for ‘best practices’ were developed using student input and advice from the three high schools involved in the project, and represent the student perspective on practices related to school breakfast:

AWARENESS

- No one knows about school breakfast. The vast majority of students did not know that breakfast was offered at their school.

Recommendation: You have to find a way to tell them about school breakfast. The use of Twitter or other social media are great ways to communicate with students. The vast majority of the students have Twitter accounts and check their accounts multiple times an hour. Everyone is taking ‘selfies’—what about ‘breakfast selfies’?

- Most students do not know what is served for breakfast and are less likely to show up and eat something when it’s a mystery. They also do not know *where* they would find out what is served for breakfast, despite menus being posted online, posted in classrooms and mentioned in the daily announcements.

Recommendation: You have to tell students what is being served—do not leave it to them to seek out this information on their own. Use social media to tell them each day what the menu is for the next morning’s breakfast.

- Students are not paying much attention to most of the existing communication in their schools—including posters, emails, and announcements.

Recommendation: You have to get out of your comfort zone and communicate with the tools that students use to communicate—like Twitter and other social media.

- Students are a captive audience while standing in the school lunch line or in the cafeteria.

Recommendation: Consider what can be done that would draw students' attention while waiting in line for lunch. Posters will likely not be effective in this environment—students are flooded with posters throughout the school and may not pay attention. Think outside the box—try including standees, messages on food service staff t-shirts, and food samples to grab students' interest.



- Students make decisions about whether to eat breakfast the night before or right after they wake up.

Recommendation: You have to communicate with them when they are ready to make the decision about eating breakfast. This may mean setting up ways to tell students what's on tap for breakfast the night before as well as early in the morning.

- Students are not familiar with school breakfast. They need an incentive to try it!

Recommendation: Offer rewards, prizes, raffles, special events, or contests to get them to try school breakfast. These prizes could range from school gear to concert tickets. Partner with vendors, parent groups and local businesses to find a mix of big and small prizes. Boys indicated that the chance to have breakfast with a local sports hero would get them to try school breakfast. Students suggested having a special parking space that students could win, or having special prime parking for those who came to eat breakfast, would motivate them to come to school breakfast. A 'get-out-of-homework' pass would also be a great incentive for trying breakfast. Work with teachers, administrators and parent groups to make these ideas a reality.

COMPETING PRIORITIES

- Lots of priorities compete with school breakfast—in particular, sleep is students’ number one priority in the morning.

Recommendation: School breakfast before school must be convenient and require no extra time. For instance, consider setting up a grab-and-go option right at the entrance that students use to come into the building on the way to class in the morning.

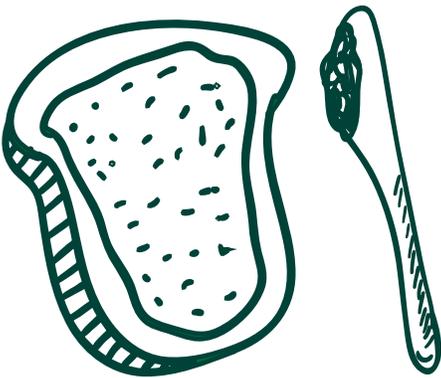
- The competition for breakfast is fierce. Popular coffee shops, fast food restaurants, and convenience stores are all trying to entice students to eat breakfast.

Recommendation: You have to provide students with something that they cannot get some place else-- great value, good nutrition, and convenience all in one! Promote the unique benefits of school breakfast as compared to less healthy or costlier options. Remind students that school breakfast comes straight out of their school meal accounts—no cash or cards needed!

TIMING

- Most students try to time their arrival to spend the least amount of time at school before the first bell.

Recommendation: School breakfast needs to be at a time when students are already at school, which is not going to be before the first bell.



- Students are not hungry right when they wake up, and most are not hungry until about 9 am. Food served before this is not going to be attractive to students. Most students indicated that they were not hungry until after 1st period. Many of them reported bringing soda, chips, bags of dry cereal and other convenience foods to eat when they got hungry in the morning. Some of the students kept these items in their backpacks and snacked between classes, in classrooms where teachers allowed food or snuck the food when teachers were not looking. Other students kept food in their lockers and would grab something as they stopped there between classes or on breaks.

Recommendation: Consider alternative times and methods for serving breakfast. Students were excited about alternative times and places for breakfast to be served. Breakfast after first period or ‘second chance breakfast’ was a popular idea. Grab-and-go breakfast made a lot of sense to students. Some students suggested breakfast in the classroom as options for days when they had homeroom or guidance.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- Students are not willing to walk further or out of their way to get breakfast. Location is really important. At many schools, the cafeteria is not on the way to classes. If there is no other option besides the cafeteria for school meals, let students know that the cafeteria breakfast time is not as hectic and crowded as it might be during lunch.

Recommendation: Breakfast served in the cafeteria is often not the most convenient for most students. Student liked the idea of having breakfast served as they walked into the building or at various locations around the building.

POLICIES

- Some schools do not allow students to take food out of the cafeteria. Students who want to eat breakfast but have limited time often cannot finish their food before they have to leave for their first class. Despite these rules, most students report that they smuggle food from home in their backpacks or lockers.

Recommendation: Administrators and facilities staff could be consulted about modifying these rules.

- The bus schedule may prevent some students from participating.

Recommendation: Investigate options such as changing the bus schedule. Breakfast can be offered as students leave the bus or at the entrance where the bus leaves the students.

FOOD PREFERENCES

Students have some very strong opinions about what they want to eat for breakfast. Popular foods or suggestions include:



- In general, boys and girls want different breakfast foods. Girls expressed more concerns about nutrition and calories, citing smoothies and fruit as their favorite options. Boys were more likely to want bacon. Many students were also in favor of more self-service options or portable items, and pre-packaged meals that they could take to go. Students also suggested that food service change up at least one item a day to keep it interesting.

Recommendation: The more options, the better. Change the menu up frequently, while keeping certain staples or popular items constant. Check in with your student body to see what they would eat and what will go to waste.

- Athletes also have strong opinions about what breakfast food they want to eat.

Recommendation: Talk to athletes and coaches. Find out what’s important for them to see offered at school breakfast.

- Students want to see name brands they are familiar with. For instance, they want to see yogurt brands that are in their refrigerators at home. They also want the food to look familiar to them. For instance- pancake on a stick is not something they would have seen before. Consider what menu options are popular for high schoolers at local food establishments.

Recommendation: Where possible, try to imitate the style or branding of popular or recognizable breakfast options—like setting up the breakfast area to look like continental breakfast at a hotel, for instance. Meet your competition.

MISCONCEPTIONS

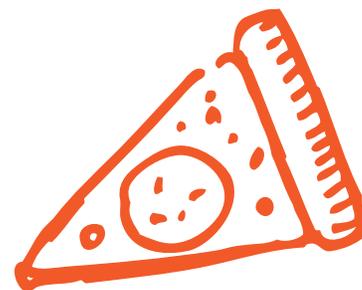
- Nutrition information is very important to most girls. They believe that the food served at school is high calorie, high fat with no nutritional value.

Recommendation: Provide easy-to-understand nutritional informational on breakfast food. Emphasize that school food service programs must follow federal nutritional guidelines. Be especially careful with foods that resemble popular fast food items—like breakfast pizza or hash brown sticks. Make sure that students understand the difference between what they are getting at school breakfast versus what they would get from a convenience store or fast food restaurant. Use calorie comparisons to highlight the advantage of school breakfast-- but sparingly, so the emphasis is not on calorie counting.

- Students do not know what school breakfast tastes like and they do not want to buy something that does not taste good. Students have a preconceived idea that breakfast at school does not taste good.

Recommendation: Students have to taste the food before they are willing to buy breakfast. Taste testing during lunch is an option. Students could test in line or after they have their meal. Students thought that taste testing during certain classes such as health, PE or family and consumer science would be good ideas.

The taste testing can be combined with rating the items in order to get feedback in an organized and fair way on what students like best. Math or marketing classes could help with the basic data entry and statistical work. Student also suggested serving breakfast items for lunch occasionally to highlight items found at breakfast.



- Students associate ‘school breakfast’ with unhealthy, unappealing food.

Recommendation: You can work against this misperception by having them taste the food and providing them with easy-to-understand nutrition information.

- Students do not have a realistic idea of what food costs. They often do not pay for food in restaurants or convenience stores. Many believe that food at popular coffee shops and breakfast at school cost the same amount.

Recommendation: Provide students with cost and nutrition comparisons for school breakfast and local popular establishments that serve breakfast.

- Some students who are athletes have a misperception about whether eating before or after working out or lifting is healthy.

Recommendation: Work with your coaches to communicate a clear message about healthy breakfast. Students reported that their coaches were constantly telling them to eat a healthy breakfast. Talk to the coaching staff about how you can work together to present a consistent message to student-athletes.

PROMOTING SCHOOL BREAKFAST

- Students have a lot to say. It is important to engage them and get their input. They are your target audience, after all!

Recommendation: There are many ways to engage students, such as forming a subcommittee on student council that works with food service, taste testings, or surveys. Try using some of the new polling technology to give students the chance to vote on possible breakfast items. Some student input can be negative, but after students have had the opportunity to voice their negative opinions, they may have many great ideas and are eager to be heard and to help.

- Students like the idea of competitions.

Recommendation: Competitions between schools and between grades are good ways to encourage participation for eating breakfast. Or consider a “punch-card” system, where students can be entered into a raffle upon participating in school breakfast a certain number of times. Prizes could include items ranging from school gear to iPads to gift cards.*

* Keep in mind that some prize items suggested may not be feasible from the school nutrition budget; however, funding may be possible through the general fund.

- Students need to *want* to spend extra time in the school cafeteria if school breakfast is served traditionally before the bell.

Recommendation: Think about what you can do to make the school cafeteria a place where students will want to spend extra time and hang out. Monitors with movies or TV and music are a start. Other options might be video games, pin ball machines, or decorations for holidays, homecoming/prom, and other special events. Alternatively, think about ways you can nudge students to use and grow familiar with the space—such as holding academic advising meetings there, or before-school tutoring. Offer the space up for clubs to reserve for before school meetings.

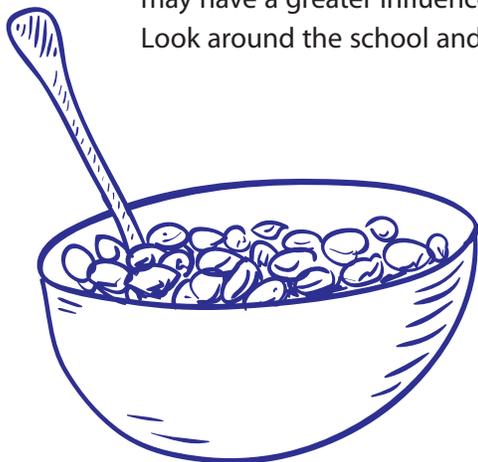
- Some school activities or classes are held before the regular school day starts. These students are a perfect group to try school breakfast.

Recommendation: Work with the teachers and activity leaders to coordinate breakfast for these students. Offer up the cafeteria as a meeting space for these activities or classes.

OTHER INFLUENCES

- Parents are not that important in the decision-making of high school students about breakfast. Most students report their parents do not know if they eat breakfast or not.

Recommendation: Parents are not as important in this decision as you might assume. Other adults may have a greater influence over whether students eat breakfast or not, such as coaches or teachers. Look around the school and see who you think might have sway over the students.



- As students transition from elementary school to middle school to high school, they are working on developing their autonomy. Making autonomous decisions about what they eat for breakfast is part of their development process.

Recommendation: You need to respect this autonomy and use it to your advantage. Treat them more like adults to help them make more autonomous decisions. Gain student input when possible, and avoid being condescending or talking down to students.