



# Strategies To Increase School Breakfast Participation In Middle and High Schools

Unlike elementary school children, middle and high school students have more freedom to purchase food from local corner stores and fast food restaurants each morning before arriving to school. These food vendors offer students the variety, taste, eating environment, and convenience that they seek. Therefore, schools need to work extra hard to compete for older students' business. Below are some concrete suggestions to reach this challenging audience.

## **Get Students Involved**

- Create a school breakfast advisory group consisting of middle and high school students. Ask the group to research student perceptions of school breakfast and the barriers to eating at school. After gathering this information, request that the group propose solutions and help the food service staff and school administrators implement changes.
- Ask marketing and/or health students to devise a School Breakfast Campaign to promote the program to older students. Have them design and administer promotional activities, posters, slogans and broadcast announcements. Ask local businesses to fund any incurred expenses.
- Hold taste tests for students and have them vote on their favorite items. Be sure to add these foods to the menu.
- Ask student club advisors, including music, chorus, orchestra, drama, chess, etc., to hold their meetings in the cafeteria during breakfast.

## **Change the Atmosphere**

- Provide entertainment during breakfast by playing music or showing "news-oriented" TV programs or videos.
- Give the cafeteria a facelift with a new paint job, mural, or colorful pictures and posters.

## **Offer Incentives and Activities**

- Solicit stores or vendors to donate a bike, boom box, or gift certificate for a monthly raffle. Allow middle and high school students to administer the raffle.
- Arrange for a local radio station to conduct a live broadcast from the cafeteria.
- Ask student bands or singing groups to perform during breakfast.

## **Make Breakfast More Convenient**

- Institute a Grab n' Go breakfast by placing breakfast carts around the school where students hang out. These easy to access kiosks can compete with the quick service of outside competition.
- In order to serve breakfast more quickly, run two serving lines, create a self-service breakfast bar, and offer foods that are easy to grab.
- Keep the cafeteria open later in the school day so that students who arrive later or have morning free periods can still eat breakfast.

## **Partner with Staff Leaders**

- Encourage coaches to hold team breakfasts to promote team unity and health.
- Get active teachers to participate in school breakfast in order to influence more students to attend.

## **Involve Academics**

- Ask home economics, health education, and physical education teachers to promote the School Breakfast Program and possibly incorporate breakfast messages into their lesson plans.
- Link language instruction to breakfast by having students translate menus into the languages they are studying.
- Have science classes perform a nutritional analysis of the breakfast menu. The metabolic effects of different breakfast menus could also be presented as part of a biology lesson.
- Encourage teachers to use breakfast time for tutoring, conferences, etc.