

Grab and Go Breakfast

Serving “grab and go” breakfast provides remarkable flexibility for schools. Students generally pick up a bagged breakfast meal from carts in the hallway or from the cafeteria on the way to class and eat at their desks. “Grab and go” helps schools overcome many of the barriers that keep children from participating in the traditional breakfast program that is served before the school day starts. “Grab and go,” a particularly popular model among secondary schools, helps districts overcome many of the barriers that keep children from participating in the traditional school breakfast program. “Grab and go” is an important option for schools that may find it difficult to deliver meals directly to the classroom or that prefer food service staff to manage the counting and claiming of meals.

What it Looks Like

- School nutrition staff packs breakfast meals into bags to be picked up in the cafeteria or from carts or kiosks located in the hallway or other high-traffic areas.
- Students pick up breakfast meals before the bell on the way to class.
- Students participating in breakfast are counted by school nutrition staff when the meal is picked up either through the through the point of sale (POS) system already in place in the cafeteria or using mobile POS systems or manual lists at each cart.
- Students can eat at their desks, on the way to class, or in other designated areas. Menu items are typically portable and easy to eat on the go.
- Breakfast generally takes about 10 minutes to eat once children are in their classroom, and is often done during morning activities, such as announcements, turning in homework or individual reading time so no instructional time is lost.
- When finished eating, students clear breakfast trash and wipe down desks. Breakfast trash can be placed

in the hallway to be collected by custodial staff and liquid milk can be discarded in the sink or, if there is no sink, in a designated bucket.

Keys to Successful Implementation

- When teachers, parents, and administrators support alternative service strategies like “grab and go,” participation can reach its full potential. Engaging these stakeholders in the implementation process to address possible obstacles is essential.
- Schools using a “grab and go” model should ensure that kiosks or service carts are strategically placed throughout the school and that there are an adequate number of trash cans to discard breakfast trash in the hallways and classrooms.
- The effectiveness of “grab and go” models is amplified when breakfast is offered free to all students regardless of income. Offering breakfast free to all students reduces stigma associated with school breakfast and increases participation which helps the school nutrition department budget.

