

How to Maintain a Strong School Breakfast Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Schools are experiencing unique challenges when it comes to school meal participation this school year, but feeding children remains the top priority. The tips below provide ideas for increasing participation when students are in the school building and when they are in a distance learning model. For MDE School Breakfast Program guidance, visit [Breakfast Encourages Students to Thrive](#).

	When Students are In-Person:	When Students are Distance Learning:	Additional Resources
Communication	Communicate with all students and staff <i>where</i> breakfast served, <i>when</i> breakfast is served, and <i>what</i> is for breakfast. If changes occur, notify all students and staff prior to the date of it changing.	Communicate through emails, newsletters, and social media about the pickup and/or delivery dates and times. For families in need of special dietary accommodations, communicate and make a plan for any special instructions they should know when obtaining meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and Advertise: Giving Parents the 411 on School Breakfast (MDE) • Newsletter Examples for the School Breakfast Program (MDE) • Social Media Examples for Parents (MDE) • Social Media Examples for Students (MDE)
Menu Planning	Portable and non-messy foods are ideal. Grab and go items will work well for a variety of service options. On a regular basis, check in with teachers and custodial staff to see what is working well or needs to be changed for students who are eating outside of the cafeteria (considering waste, spills, etc.).	Determine the number of meals that will be included at each pick up opportunity. Menu items may need to be altered depending on the containers and packaging that you have available. Train staff on efficient ways to pack items. See Providing multiple meals at a time (USDA) for guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Menu Needs in SY2020-21 (School Nutrition Association) • Sample SFSP Bag Lunch and Breakfast Menus (MDE) • Sample SSO Lunch and Breakfast Menus (MDE) • Grab and Go Menu Ideas (University of MN Extension) • Breakfast Menu Ideas and Recipe Resources (MDE)

	When Students are In-Person:	When Students are Distance Learning:	Additional Resources
Serving Logistics	<p>Mobile serving carts are ideal if you are serving students outside the cafeteria. Consider repurposing existing equipment that is not in use (refer to the Equipment Guide under Additional Resources for ideas). Also consider flexible serving options, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grab and go:</i> the University of Minnesota Extension offers Tips for Offering Grab and Go Breakfasts and a Best Practice video. • <i>Breakfast in the classroom:</i> view the Dining Guide for Meals in the Classroom from the School Nutrition Association and the Equipment Video (Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom). • <i>Second chance breakfast:</i> view tips from the Breakfast after the Bell (FRAC) guide. 	<p>Create a procedure for distributing hot foods and cold foods. Include details such as a list of equipment needed, a detailed schedule, and meal count forms. See Food Safety Guidance for Meal Distribution (MDE) for more information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment Guide (National Dairy Council) • GENYOUTH grant opportunity: up to \$3,000 per school for resources related to meal distribution and delivery (i.e. soft-sided coolers, bags for individual servings, and protective equipment)
Promotion and Marketing	<p>Take photos of meals and share them on social media or other promotional materials. Use announcements and signage to provide frequent reminders. Consider connecting with teachers who might be looking for project ideas for their students as a way to get students involved in digital or print marketing.</p>	<p>Take photos of the packaged meals and share them on social media or other promotional materials. For social media inspiration, visit the MN School Nutrition Association (MNSNA) and the School Nutrition Association (SNA) on Facebook.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's Time to Mobilize Your Marketing (School Nutrition Association) • Promotion and Marketing Resources (MDE) • Team Nutrition - Breakfast Materials (USDA)