

# Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual

**Title:** BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

**Section:** 407.4

**Board Report:** 11-0126-PO1

**Date Adopted:** January 26, 2011

**Policy:**

## THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:

That the Board adopt a Breakfast in the Classroom Policy ("Policy").

**PURPOSE:** This policy establishes the requirements for the full implementation of Breakfast in the Classroom ("BIC") program in all Chicago Public Elementary Schools. This policy seeks to create a school environment that supports breakfast participation by all students, encourages students to embrace a morning routine that includes breakfast and creates a healthy start to each school day.

The Breakfast in the Classroom Program supports the Board's commitment to serve the needs of the whole child (physical, emotional and academic) while at school. The primary goal of the BIC program is to promote student health and academic achievement by providing a nutritious breakfast as a routine start of every school day. By the end of the June 2011, CPS will be serving breakfast to approximately 295,000 Elementary Students in 474 schools.

## POLICY TEXT:

### I. Background

CPS participates in the Federal School Breakfast Program in which the US Department of Agriculture ("USDA") encourages all schools to implement a Breakfast in the Classroom model to ensure all students take part in breakfast. This model is preferred because more students eat breakfast and enjoy the health and educational benefits when it is provided as a routine start to every school day.

Research shows that an effective school breakfast program not only reduces hunger but also has a range of positive educational outcomes, including the following:

- Eating breakfast improves math grades, vocabulary skills and memory. Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast hours earlier at home.
- Students who participate in school breakfast have lower rates of absence and tardiness and exhibit decreased behavioral and psychological problems. Children who eat school breakfast have fewer discipline problems and visit school nurses' offices less often.
- Children who participate in school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk, and consume a wider variety of foods than those who do not eat school breakfast or who have breakfast at home. Children and adolescents who eat breakfast are significantly less likely to be overweight, while skipping breakfast is associated with a higher risk of obesity.

Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, all Chicago Public Elementary Schools with a free and reduced meal eligibility population of over 40% or more were required by ISBE mandate to implement one of the following two breakfast programs for their students: (1) breakfast served before school in the lunchroom available to all students who elect to eat breakfast, known as Traditional Breakfast, or (2) Breakfast in the Classroom where a pre-bagged hot or cold breakfast is provided to all students when entering the school and eaten in the classroom with the teacher at the commencement of each school day. Both programs are offered to students at no charge and is referred to as Universal Breakfast.

Schools that voluntarily adopted the Breakfast in the Classroom model achieved an average 69% student breakfast participation rate compared to an average 23% student participation for schools that adopted the model where breakfast is served in the school dining center. In addition to the dramatically increased participation rate, making breakfast a routine part of the instructional day through the BIC model relieves students of the challenges posed by bus drop off schedules, relieves the pressure of getting to class on time, respects the desire of students to be physically active before school starts and eliminates the potential stigma of serving breakfast only to free eligible students before school.

As of January 1, 2011, 192 CPS elementary schools are voluntarily participating in Breakfast in the Classroom. Based on the success of Breakfast in the Classroom at these 192 schools, the Board wishes to implement the BIC model in all CPS Elementary Schools.

## **II. Implementation.**

All CPS Elementary Schools that do not currently offer Traditional Breakfast or the Breakfast in the Classroom program will establish and operate a Breakfast in the Classroom program by June 30, 2011. in accordance with the schedule and timelines issued by the Department of Nutrition Support Services (NSS). NSS will employ a phased rollout strategy designed to ensure schools receive the necessary supports to successfully implement the BIC program. All schools shall comply with the standards, requirements, program goals and accountability measures outlined in the BIC Guidelines issued by NSS when providing Breakfast in the Classroom.

## **III. Authorization to Formulate Guidelines.**

The Nutrition Support Services Logistics Officer is authorized to issue Guidelines for the effective implementation of the Universal Breakfast in the Classroom program, the requirements of this Policy and further to ensure compliance with USDA regulations in the provision of school breakfast meals.

## **IV. Compliance.**

Failure to abide by this Policy or the BIC Guidelines may subject employees to discipline up to and including dismissal in accordance with the Board's Employee Discipline and Due Process Policy.

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**Amends/Rescinds:**

**Cross References:**

**Legal References:** 105 ILCS 126/15, 7CFR 220.

# Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom Frequently Asked Questions from Parents



## 1. Why did Chicago Public Schools (CPS) launch the Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom program?

We adopted Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom to ensure that all of our students have access to—and eat—breakfast each day. This program is a proven strategy to increase breakfast participation, which helps students focus and do better in class. In fact, we’ve found that when breakfast is offered to students in the classroom, participation in the program increases significantly – from about 23% of students (before school) to close to 70% of students (in the classroom) eating breakfast at school. Given the very positive health and academic benefits of the breakfast consumption, our goal is to extend these benefits to as many students as possible.

The program is backed by the USDA, the Healthy Schools Campaign, the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children, the Illinois Hunger Coalition, the Food Research Action Council, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, Share Our Strength, the Chicago Policy Council and others. In developing the program—as well as in implementing it—we consult with food allergy experts at Children’s Memorial Hospital and the environmental affairs team at CPS.

## 2. Is my child required to participate?

No. No student is ever required to take any meal offered by Chicago Public Schools. That includes breakfast and lunch.

## 3. CPS just instituted universal breakfast in school dining centers in 2009. Why not continue with that program? Wasn’t it working?

CPS piloted universal breakfast—where all students are offered a free breakfast, regardless of eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch—in 2007, and launched it as a district-wide policy in 2009. We did so because a universal breakfast policy can help reduce the stigma associated with eating breakfast at school.

However, our data—and data nationwide—show only a minor bump in the number of students eating breakfast under the program. That may be for a variety of reasons: at some schools, a stigma may be associated with eating breakfast before school (e.g. “only low income students eat school breakfast”), students enjoy playing outside before the school bell rings, students can’t get to school early enough to take advantage, or because students or families are running late.

Because our goal is to help combat hunger and to increase the number of students eating breakfast—which helps them do better in school—we sought out an alternative approach. We tested the approach with 200 schools over the last two years, and the schools found the program both workable and helpful. While some teachers were initially somewhat skeptical, they quickly found that the program made the rest of the day much more successful.

**4. How long does it take kids to eat in the morning? Doesn't that subtract from instructional time? And doesn't CPS already have one of the shortest school days of any urban district in the nation?**

Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom takes just 10 minutes each day. And it is true that we have one of the shortest days. But it's not true—and not fair—to say that kids are getting 10 minutes less of instruction. Many teachers use the time during breakfast to conduct many of the activities they usually conduct first thing in the morning, like collecting homework and taking attendance. Others use the opportunity as a teaching moment, where students learn about nutrition and health, as well as sustainability and recycling (in fact, we provide all schools with sample materials and curriculum to support this). Still other teachers use the time to ask students to read or do individual work.

When we talk about the 10 minute time period in a vacuum, though, we miss out on a larger and more important point: *This 10-minute period is an investment in the rest of the school day.* When kids spend 10 minutes up front eating breakfast, the rest of the school day is more successful. How do we know? Principals and teachers tell us! They report that students are quicker to get settled and more engaged in classroom activities. They also report a reduction in tardiness and fewer behavioral problems—and fewer visits to the school nurse's office.

**5. But how do you really keep it to 10 minutes?**

Through piloting the program in 200 schools, we have learned and adopted a number of best practices to keep the class on schedule. It starts with a teacher "how-to" session, which we do as part of the implementation effort at every school. Additionally, teachers and students use timers to signal when 2 minutes remain, and the breakfast captain announces when breakfast is over.

**6. Every school is different. How can you apply a one-size-fits-all program to every school?**

While the policy is consistent from school to school, the implementation is different. Put simply, it's definitely not one-size-fits-all. In fact, we work closely with principals, school dining managers and other staff to customize the program in a way that works for the students and the routines at each school. And, we make adjustments along the way to ensure the program is working well.

In fact, we piloted the program in 200 schools already—that's approximately 40% of our schools. So, we know a lot about what works and how to adjust.

**7. Can my school opt out?**

Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom is a district-wide policy and individual schools cannot opt out. We do, however, recognize that the circumstances of each school vary and we support local school planning to implement the program. The school plan must demonstrate that it achieves the goal to ensure that every child is able to start his or her school day with a good nutritious breakfast, and that this is accomplished in a way that protects the health and safety of each child and does not isolate or stigmatize any child.

**8. But most of the kids at my school get breakfast at home! What if we don't need this? After all, only a few of the students at my school are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.**

In CPS generally, more than 8 in 10 students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. However, it is true that in some schools, that number is as low as 20%.

It's helpful, though, to think of this in terms of individual students, and not percentages. Even in our most affluent schools, *one in five* children may need access to this program. And even those families that don't qualify for free or reduced-price lunches can benefit from it. In tough economic times, saving on grocery bills helps every family.

**9. If students ate at home, won't they eat breakfast twice? Are you concerned about how that affects childhood obesity?**

Researchers call this phenomenon "breakfast doubling," and the largest recent study on this focused on universal breakfast. According to the USDA, just 3% of kids ate twice, vs. 2% in control studies. Breakfast *skipping* is a larger concern; according to the Food Research and Action Center, 17% of elementary students report skipping breakfast at least three times per week.

**10. How is school personnel (teachers, school dining managers, custodial staff) trained to operate the Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom program?**

We've developed a comprehensive training program for all personnel involved with the operation of the program. This training program incorporates the best practices gleaned from operations in 200 elementary schools. It reflects input from principals, teachers, engineers, school dining managers and administrative personnel. Our implementation specialists provide on-site training to the personnel at each school, starting two weeks prior to the launch of the program.

**11. What is included on the Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom menu?**

The breakfast menu (and every CPS menu) meets and exceeds the USDA nutrition standards for school meals. In early 2010, CPS adopted the USDA HealthierUS Challenge nutrition standards – the program promoted by First Lady Michelle Obama in her *Let's Move* campaign to reduce childhood obesity.

In most schools, students are offered the choice of a hot entrée (e.g. egg sandwich, mini pancakes, French toast stick, oatmeal) or a cold entrée (e.g. cornflakes with all natural fruit-flavored yogurt, raisin bran cereal with reduced fat cheese stick, whole grain breakfast bar, whole wheat bagel with jelly). Breakfasts also include fruit every day and a choice of milk (skim white, or 1%).

A minimum of 25% of our bread products at breakfast are whole grain. All of our breakfast cereals contain at least 3 grams of fiber, or less than 5 grams of sugar per serving. Our muffins do not contain sugar as the first ingredient and, we limit jelly to ½ oz. per student to lower sugar in our menus.

## **12. My child has food allergies, and I am concerned about food in the classroom. How are you protecting and accommodating children with allergies—especially life-threatening ones?**

We carefully considered food allergies when building this program, and we continue to work closely with parents, students and schools to ensure that every child is safe. In fact, at the 200 schools where we piloted the program, we have made successful adjustments for many students with food allergies.

It's helpful to start with what we do: we follow the guidelines established by the USDA for food allergies, which require us to make reasonable food accommodations for children with food-related disabilities. The USDA outlines three food-related disabilities: food anaphylaxis, phenylketonuria and diabetes.

In general, if the student or parent provides a physician's statement for food substitution, we make substitutions for all meals served at the school – including Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom.

It's important to note that students with food allergies *must* have a Section 504 plan or IEP with an Individual Health Care Plan on file so that our schools know about the allergy and can identify the necessary accommodations for your child, including developing a safety plan. If your child has a food allergy, contact your principal to initiate the Section 504 discussion.

For many of our parents, food anaphylaxis is the primary concern. Peanut allergies are by far the most prevalent food allergy; *beginning April 1, 2011 there are no peanut or tree nut products served on our classroom breakfast menus.* We work closely with schools and families to determine the best course, because we recognize that while some parents don't want *any* peanuts in the school, others want their children to learn how to manage their allergy. In some schools, that means we may:

- Invite parents to participate in monitoring and cleaning up
- Create "allergen-awareness zones" in the classroom.
- Encourage students or groups of students to participate in the "buddy system" to watch out for one another

We also continue to work with food allergy experts at Children's Memorial Hospital as we implement the program—especially on rarer allergies such as eggs or dairy.

It's worth noting that food in the classroom is not just a breakfast issue. Food also appears in the classroom during celebrations, special events and other classroom activities. Our food allergy management policy provides schools with guidance on handling outside food appropriately.

## **13. Does the Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom program increase the amount of waste that CPS contributes to the waste stream?**

Serving food to hundreds of thousands of students inevitably generates some waste, but we have many programs in place to reduce the amount of food and packaging waste we produce. It starts with the amount of food we order. On an ongoing basis, school dining staff reviews the production records for their meal programs to determine how many of each breakfast or lunch

they prepare and serve. These estimates are based on past student meal selections. Keep in mind that students are never required to select a breakfast in the morning.

As it relates to Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom, we have taken a number of steps to reduce waste:

- The paper bags in the program include 60% to 100% recycled content and can be recycled again. Modular meal program containers are biodegradable and the spork used is also biodegradable. While most serving materials are biodegradable, we recognize that sometimes trash bags are not. We encourage recycling in our classroom blue bins whenever possible.
- Many schools have chosen to recycle their milk cartons as part of the Morning Max program.
- Our Styrofoam bowls actually have less volume than the meal trays used in the traditional dining-center-based program.
- Non-perishable wrapped items (like granola bars) that are not consumed are collected through our *Love Food Hate Waste* Program and distributed elsewhere.

#### **14. Do schools with Morning Max: Breakfast in the Classroom programs have to worry about problems with pests?**

Through CPS and the Department of Public Health inspection processes, we have seen no correlation between schools that are serving Breakfast in the Classroom and an increase in inspection failures due to concerns related to food in the classroom. Furthermore, many custodians in schools with BIC have noticed that students are neater throughout the school day as a result of their participation in the brief clean-up process after BIC.

#### **15. Is this program run by Chartwells, the largest food services contractor for CPS?**

Yes, Chartwells operates this program on our behalf. They are widely recognized as experts in providing high-quality meals to large groups—including school districts, universities and major corporations. Additionally, Preferred Meal Systems provides meal components to one-third of our schools. However, Chicago Public Schools' team members manage the operations in these schools.

Make no mistake: this is a Chicago Public Schools program. In our most recent request for bid one of the objectives we included was that CPS “continue to increase breakfast participation at all grade levels of the program with emphasis on Breakfast in the Classroom.” The Illinois State Board of Education reviewed and approved this request for bid—like it does for all of our food services bids.

We are directing the implementation of this policy and program, and it is one we support because it increases the number of students who eat breakfast, which has a range of positive outcomes for our students.

As a service provider, Chartwells is only paid when a meal is served. Our contract with them remains the same—they are not paid any differently for this program. When more meals are served, our contractors are paid more. When fewer meals are served, they are paid less.

**16. Does this add a financial burden for the district in difficult economic times?**

No. In fact, we adopted the policy under the premise that it would not add any financial burden.

**17. Who should I contact if I have additional questions?**

If you have additional questions please feel free to reach out to:

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