

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM (BIC) PROGRAM

1. Why did the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) decide to launch the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program?

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), in partnership with the Los Angeles Fund for Public Education, California Food Policy Advocates, LA County Department of Public Health's Choose LA Initiative, and community partners are embarking in a new initiative to serve breakfast to our students through the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) project.

We adopted a pilot of the Breakfast in the Classroom program at 20 LAUSD schools to determine ways on how to ensure that all of our students have access to—and eat—breakfast each day. This program has proven 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. Recent studies have shown that when schools provide an in-classroom breakfast or a grab 'n go type of meal, their students will increase their academic performance, decrease absenteeism and tardiness, increase their attention span and focus, and reduce their visits to the nurse because of hunger. 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.

2. Can my school opt out?

The District and community partners believe in the benefits of Breakfast in the Classroom. Opting-out is not available.

3. Are students required to participate?

No. No student is ever required to take any meal offered by LAUSD Food Services Division. That includes breakfast, lunch and supper.

4. How long does it take kids to eat in the morning? Doesn't that subtract from instructional time?

Breakfast in the Classroom takes just 10 minutes each day at the time the school period starts. The time utilized by BIC is considered part of the instructional minutes for the day. 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. Still other teachers use the time to ask students to read or do individual work.

This 10-minute period is an investment in the rest of the school day. When kids spend 10 minutes eating breakfast at the beginning of the day, then 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. 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 food services managers and other staff to customize the program in a way that works for the students and the routines at each school. We make adjustments along the way to ensure the program is working well.

6. But most of the kids at my school get breakfast at home; what if they eat twice?

In reference to “breakfast doubling,” the largest recent study conducted at New York City Public Schools stated 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 student’s report skipping breakfast at least three times per week.

7. What if only a few of the students at my school are eligible for free or reduced price-meals?

In LAUSD, more than 8 in 10 students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. 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. For our District, *one in five* students may need access to this program. Remember, this program is accessible to all students regardless of eligibility.

8. For students that do not qualify for the school meal program, are they required to purchase a breakfast every day?

Please remember, if a child does not want to participate in BIC, they do not have to take a breakfast. However, for those who do participate, BIC is considered a universal breakfast and all students in the school will eat at no cost. Money is not exchanged and students are not required to purchase anything.

9. How is school personnel (principals, teachers, school food services managers, and custodial staff) trained to operate the 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 and input from principals, teachers, food service professionals, managers and administrative personnel. Parent volunteers will also be trained. For more information on how to become a parent volunteer, please contact your school administration for details.

10. What is included on the Breakfast in the Classroom menu?

- Milk is served daily. Entrées are nourishing and easy to eat quickly and include popular breakfast items such as cold cereal and yogurt. On “Hot Food Days” a hot entrée such as a breakfast burrito or breakfast sandwich will be served. Café LA menus are available at http://cafe-la.lausd.net/cafe_la_menu.
- The breakfast menu (and every LAUSD menu) meets the USDA nutrition standards for school meals. In early 2010, LAUSD adopted the USDA HealthierUS Challenge nutrition standards – the program promoted by First Lady Michelle Obama in *Let’s Move* campaign to reduce childhood obesity.
- Breakfasts also include fruit and milk. The menu has been modified to eliminate sticky items such as syrup, jams, etc.

11. 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. 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. In general, the parent provides a physician’s statement for food substitution and the Food Services Division makes substitutions for all meals served at the school – including 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 or visit our website at: http://cafe-la.lausd.net/parents/special_diets to initiate the Section 504 discussion.

12. Does the Breakfast in the Classroom program increase the amount of waste that LAUSD 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 cafeteria 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 Breakfast in the Classroom, we have taken a number of steps to reduce waste:

- The paper trays or plastic bags used in the program are recyclable.
- A pre-wrapped spoon is only utilized during service of cereal and is also biodegradable.
- No Styrofoam is utilized.
- We are working with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) to incorporate the new recycling regulations into the BIC program.
- Non-perishable wrapped items (like granola, or whole fruits) are considered savable items that students can save for later. We also have our *Food Donation Policy Program*, for more information, please visit http://cafe-la.lausd.net/food_donation_program.

13. Do schools with Breakfast in the Classroom programs have to worry about problems with pests?

Through the LAUSD Maintenance and Operations (M&O) and the Department of Public Health inspection processes, we have not seen a correlation between the pilot 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.

14. 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.

15. If the students are used to coming in early, (for early breakfast and to accommodate the working parents), who will be responsible for the supervision if they are not in the cafeteria area?

This is an Administration decision to determine if time students are on campus needs to be changed.

15. My staff is concerned about increased tardiness because students will know that the first few minutes is breakfast – and they have already eaten. What can we do to prevent this?

Recent studies have shown that these breakfast programs have actually decreased tardiness and increased attendance. LAUSD recommends continued communication with parents to stress the start time of the school day includes the BIC program. Parents need to know that important information and lessons will be covered during the first 10 minutes of the day.

16. Will the District provide more custodial time to support this program?

LAUSD is working with schools on a case by case basis for custodial support. With the pilot schools, there were no concerns of additional need for custodial time. Please remember that the custodian will not

be required to clean tables and trash after early morning breakfast. They will only be needed to pick-up trash after service is done. Their time can be used to work on other needs in the morning.

17. The majority of my students prefer a late breakfast (2nd chance/Nutrition break). Why are we canceling this option?

By providing breakfast at the start of the day and a lunch in the middle of the day, we can ensure that a student is well-nourished which can help to support the academic activities.

Food Services has found that when students participate in the 2nd Chance/Nutrition breakfast options, the meal service time is close to lunch time and/or it coincides with a recess break. Therefore, students either forego a breakfast to have a recess break or they eat breakfast and then are not hungry for lunch.

18. What happens if the teacher is out of the classroom for the day?

Teachers and students are provided training to let them know how the program works and integrates into their school day. Students will bring the supplies, distribute to other students and conduct clean-up. Teachers continue on with lessons for the day. If a teacher is not in the classroom, students continue on with their duties.

19. My school has half its classrooms upstairs. What are the options?

Students are provided training on how to remove the bags and carry them upstairs. If elevators are available, we work with site administration to determine who will operate the elevator. We also work with parent volunteers to assist smaller children up the stairs or using the elevator.

20. How does BIC work for field trip days?

BIC works the same for field trips. If students will be leaving prior to school starting, then meals will be provided along with a roster.

21. My school site has 2 or more volunteers in the classroom. Are they all able to have a breakfast?

Breakfasts are at no costs for students, and one teacher assigned to the classroom.

22. Is there any funding attached to the breakfast program? If so, will it come to the schools?

Schools which reach the 70% threshold for participation will be provided \$.20 per student meal served over the 70% participation and given back to the school via the General Fund.

23. I am a parent and interested in becoming a volunteer. What are my next steps?

If you are interested in participating in BIC at your child's school, please visit the school's parent center for setting up your volunteer status. For more information on how to become a parent volunteer, please contact your school administration for details.

24. I am a community member and want to provide support in BIC. What are my next steps?

LAUSD welcomes our community in continuing to provide support in all of our initiatives. For more information on Breakfast in the Classroom, please contact our BIC hotline at 213-241- 2956.