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BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM INTRODUCTION

Overview

In 2015, the City and the Department of Education (DOE) began a three-year plan to introduce Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) in kindergarten through 5th grade public elementary schools. This BIC initiative has been successful over the last five years in more than 300 NYC public schools and similarly in large school districts, such as Los Angeles and Chicago.

Breakfast is free of charge to all NYC public school students. During breakfast time in NYC public schools, children typically are more engaged in socializing than eating their essential first meal of the day - breakfast. This results in only 20% to 30% of NYC public school children participating in the traditional breakfast program. Hungry children enter the classroom unprepared to learn.

BIC ensures that children, who did not have a chance to eat breakfast in the cafeteria or did not eat at home, have an opportunity to take a breakfast as they enter their classroom. With BIC, children who otherwise may be too embarrassed to ask a teacher or principal for breakfast when they feel hungry may simply take an available BIC breakfast to enjoy in their classroom.

Furthermore, BIC is a great opportunity for students to enjoy a meal in a smaller and more controlled group setting. BIC is, also, a moment to learn the importance of socializing and eating together. The Division of Teaching and Learning included BIC in the pre-kindergarten curriculum because of the positive social and emotional benefits of eating together in the classroom. BIC in higher grades is a natural extension of the same curriculum based benefits which has long since garnered support from NYC teachers throughout the five boroughs. Many teachers and administrators have remarked, during our first year of roll out that their students were more focused and attentive at the beginning of their day when it starts with a breakfast in the classroom.

Under this program, students will have an opportunity during the first 15 minutes of class to eat a free, nutritious and delicious breakfast with their classmates. Well-fed students are more alert, and better prepared to fully participate and benefit from the instruction they receive during their school day.

The DOE’s Division of Operations and Division of Teaching and Learning (T & L) have partnered to support the BIC initiative to increase breakfast participation and learning readiness. The Office of Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Learning, in the Division of T & L, developed a activity guide with recommendations for meaningful instruction during breakfast in the classroom. Select this link to view the BIC Activity Guide.
BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM SCHOOL TRAINING GUIDE

General Service Standards

- All meals must be served within 10-15 minutes of the start of the school day, thus guaranteeing food safety.
- Leftovers and discarded materials will be picked up no later than one hour after delivery

SchoolFood Provides the following Mandated Classroom Signage:

- Monthly Breakfast Express Menu (BIC Breakfast)
- All in One Poster that includes the following:
  - Public Notification of Anti-discrimination Policy
  - And Justice for All Poster
  - Choking Sign
  - My Plate Poster

Breakfast Delivery Options

- **Traditional transporter bag delivery:**
  - Transporter bags are delivered by SchoolFood staff who place the bags outside the door to each classroom
  - Transporter bags are labeled with each classroom number to ensure that each class receives the correct food items in the transporter(s)
  - Deliveries are made approximately 15 minutes before the beginning of the school day
  - Children entering their classrooms may select from the various selection of breakfast items in the transporter bags

- **Traditional Grab & Go delivery:**
  - SchoolFood staff sets up Grab & Go stations as determined by the principal in consultation with the School Food Service Manager (SFSM), within 15 minutes preceding the start of the school day
  - Children may pick up a packaged breakfast on the way to their classroom where they will eat the breakfast

- **Grab & Go Hybrid delivery:**
  - This two-part delivery option is available at eligible BIC schools where the doors open to the community 30 minutes or more before the school day begins
  - This option was created to provide early arriving children with the opportunity to eat BIC breakfast in the cafeteria while ensuring children, arriving closer to or after the time class begins, have the opportunity to enjoy a BIC breakfast in their classroom
  - School selection is based on adequate kitchen space, electricity, and other facility specific factors
SchoolFood staff sets up a Grab & Go station in the cafeteria or other appropriate designated area where children arriving at least 30 minutes before the school day begins may pick up a packaged breakfast and eat in the cafeteria or the classroom.

- Cafeteria Service ends approximately 15 minutes before children go up to their classrooms.
- SchoolFood staff must set up another Grab and Go station where children exit the cafeteria so that students arriving closer to the start of the school day may pick up a packaged breakfast on the way to their classroom where they will eat the breakfast.

**Breakfast in the Classroom Meals**

- BIC meals meet the mandated nutrition standards set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) School Breakfast Program.
  - Two grains (including optional Meat/Meat Alternate)
  - Fruit (whole fruit, canned fruit and/or fruit juice)
  - Milk

- Meals are packaged in a clear plastic bag containing two grain components and fruit. Teachers and staff are not allowed to disassemble the bags. All items **must be** served in order to be in compliance with United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Nutrition Standards for school meals.

- Cereal and fruit are offered daily as additional offerings.

- If the Principal or a designee requests more BIC meals, the request must be approved by the School Food Service Manager (SFSM).

- Eligible schools participating in the BIC receive warm sandwiches two to three times per week modeled after the number of days per week hot food was served from the kitchen prior to BIC as a part of the traditional breakfast service.

**Meal Accountability Procedures**

- A weekly meal participation “bubble sheet” roster will be distributed to each teacher into their mailbox by the school administration on close of business Friday for use in each classroom for the following week’s breakfast service.

- Each day, the teacher will “bubble in” the appropriate date next to the student’s name indicating that the student was served a complete breakfast.

- Attendance cannot be used to indicate that a meal was served.

- At the end of the breakfast service week, completed “bubble sheet” rosters will be submitted to the designated School Aide or SchoolFood kitchen staff point person.

- Schools with Point of Sale (POS) systems will also be required to use the “bubble sheet” roster to account for daily BIC student breakfast participation.
BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM SCHOOL TRAINING GUIDE (continued)

- SchoolFood staff will complete a “bubble sheet” roster in the cafeteria at schools employing the “Grab and Go Hybrid delivery” method and the School Aide or other principal designee will compare and combine the SchoolFood staff and classroom teachers “bubble sheet” rosters.

Trash Removal and Transporter Retrieval

- Trash bags and paper towels are provided for each participating classroom
- SchoolFood takes primary responsibility for collecting trash from your classroom after BIC service as well as ensuring proper disposal
- Teachers should contact the custodian for any large spills
- At the end of meal service, trash bags should be tied, closed and placed into the transporter bags to avoid spillage
- Transporter Bag Waste Retrieval:
  - Transporter bags are left in the hallway outside the classroom door for collection by SchoolFood staff or Principal designee
  - All unused meals should be placed back into the transporter bags
  - SchoolFood staff will collect all uneaten meals and breakfast refuse at the time designed by the school’s principal and/or classroom teachers, within one hour of service
  - The sorting of uneaten meals as well as the proper disposal and recycling of all refuse is performed by SchoolFood staff in the school kitchen
  - Transporter bags will be picked up no later than one hour after delivery
- Traditional and Hybrid Grab and Go Trash Retrieval:
  - Each classroom is provided with a clear plastic bag in which all refuse should be placed
  - SchoolFood staff will collect all uneaten meals and breakfast refuse at the time designed by the school’s principal and classroom teachers
  - The sorting of uneaten meals as well as the proper disposal and recycling of all refuse is performed by SchoolFood staff in the school kitchen
  - Sealed plastic bags containing trash will be picked up no later than one hour after delivery

Classroom Procedures Recommendations

- Teachers should communicate with BIC Point person to ensure their classroom has the correct amount of meals each day to minimize excessive left-overs
- Teachers may designate students to act as Student Ambassadors, be classroom leaders, and/or assist with the distribution of meals to other students
- Teachers are encouraged to turnover or cover classroom trashcans during breakfast time in order to discourage food waste being placed into classroom garbage cans
Pest Activity Concerns

SchoolFood’s Integrated Pest Management team works hard to ensure schools do not have problems with pests. Other schools participating in BIC report no correlation between Breakfast in the Classroom and an increase in inspection failures related to food in the classroom. In fact, many have noticed that BIC has encouraged students to be neater.

• Tips to minimizing pest activity in classrooms:

  ▪ The first step: Control and monitor the amount of snacks and food permitted in non-designated areas throughout the building. Since classrooms are assigned as a designated area for BIC, then school staff have already been advised of proper sanitation procedures.
  ▪ Step two: Reduce clutter to deny nesting and hiding areas. Rodents travel anywhere from 10 to 30 feet from their nesting area to a food source. If rodents are observed in a certain room you must assume they are nesting somewhere in the vicinity. In order to correct this problem school staff must reduce the amount of clutter in the rooms. Closets, desks must be cleaned out and everything must be stored off the floor and in plastic tubs. In numerous cases we observed rodents building a nest in cluttered closets and storerooms.
  ▪ Step three: is to deny access and this is accomplished by installing rodent proof door sweeps on all exterior doors (if needed) and to seal as many holes as possible in the rooms. Rodents use the heating system to travel throughout a building. The gaps around the radiator pipes in the designated rooms should be sealed with copper mesh and quick dry cement. Principals should contact the Division of School Facilities to seal any holes, discovered.
  ▪ Step four: Pest Control will install rodent stations in areas inaccessible to children and monitor them as frequently as needed.

For classroom storage tips, please visit: https://blog.epa.gov/blog/2015/09/classroom-clutter-and-pests-go-hand-in-hand/

Please see the Department of Health links below for additional information:
## Contact List

- List of SchoolFood Regional Directors and District Supervisors available at this link
- List of Nursing Directors available at this link

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BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

The Department of Education has created a booklet with recommendations obtained from schools currently implementing BIC.

Below are some immediate suggestions based on the experiences of teachers and principals who have Breakfast in the Classroom in their school.

**Operational Suggestions**

- Designate students to serve as “Student Ambassadors” and assist with the distribution of meals to other students. Rotate students handing out food and straightening up as part of their classroom roles.
- As each child arrives, simultaneously take attendance and note which students take a breakfast as they enter the room.
- Use the time to:
  - Collect homework
  - Discuss current events
  - Engage in quiet reading time
  - Have students do individual classwork
  - Teach students about nutrition and health, as well as sustainability and recycling

**Content Suggestions**

- Create breakfast partners and have students work together on a “Do Now” discussion question
- Have a “Word of the Day” related to BIC, or the vocabulary used in some of your curriculum.
- Encourage friendships among classmates by using BIC time to have students learn a fact from a student they do not know and share with others in small group discussion
- Read Nutrition Labels and use them for learning fractions, decimals and percentages.
- Farm to Store: Have students research the process the food takes to get from the farm to the store (agriculture, transportation, etc.) as part of their history or social studies classroom work.
- Use ratios to have a science discussion about how quantity of ingredients changes the product.
- Have students learn about fractions by dividing their food into halves, quarters or thirds based on the fraction unit.
- Healthy Games: Students get points for making healthy breakfast/food choices throughout the day.
Q1. **What are the advantages of Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)?**
   A. Students who do not eat a nourishing breakfast are not able to concentrate well, become irritable more quickly, and show hunger-related symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches. When breakfast is moved into the classroom and offered to everyone, every student is able to start the school day ready to learn without hunger-related disruptions. Reports on BIC have shown fewer incidents of student lateness, fewer visits to the school nurse, and improved attendance.

Q2. **Are students required to participate?**
   A. No. No student is ever required to take any meal offered by SchoolFood. The number of BIC breakfasts delivered is based on the number of children who eat the breakfast. For example; if only five children eat BIC on a given morning, only 7 BIC meals will be provided the following morning. Teachers may contact SchoolFood staff to request an increase or reduction in the meals delivered.

Q3. **Most of the students at my school already eat breakfast at home before they come to school. Why do they need to have a second breakfast?**
   A. BIC meals are intended for children who are hungry. Those who don’t eat breakfast at home will have access to a healthy and nutritious meal to start their day. No child who does not want to eat or has already eaten is required to eat a second meal. The number of breakfasts delivered to the classroom is based on the number of children who are actually eating each day.

Q4. **There are only a few students at my school who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Why do I need Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC)?**
   A. BIC is available in schools so that any child in need may eat breakfast and be ready to learn. In NYC, about three-fourths of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches based on their household income level. Many more families have incomes that are near but just above this threshold. For the families of these students in particular, a free and healthy breakfast can be invaluable. A child can be hungry in any community.

Q5. **Doesn’t BIC subtract from instructional time?**
   A. Increasing the number of children who eat and are therefore ready to learn supports the quality of instructional time for all students. The quality of instruction time gained in class is optimized when teachers spend less time redirecting children who may misbehave or feel sick because they are hungry. BIC schools report that children make fewer visits to the nurse. They also experience increases in children’s class participation, self-control, concentration, and student attendance.

Q6. **What is included on the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) menu?**
   A. Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) serves the Breakfast Express Menu available at this [link](#). Breakfasts include two grain components and fruit every day. Students may also request cereal and milk on any day as well. The breakfast menu meets the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Nutrition Standards for School Meals.
Q7. Do teachers need to assist with opening milk and/or juice containers for younger children?
   A. Teachers have reported that younger students occasionally need assistance but quickly learn how to open the milk and/or juice and other food items on their own because the items are the same served in the cafeteria.

Q8. Some foods are challenging for smaller children. Can principals choose what food packages are included for various grades? For example, can items like oranges that require peeling be omitted?
   A. SchoolFood’s menus are based on the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns. The meal pattern cannot be adjusted, however, certain items like oranges can be replaced with other fruit items to accommodate the needs of students.

Q9. What does clean-up entail? Who helps with clean-up if there is no classroom para?
   A. Most clean-up is easy for students to do on their own. When students are finished with breakfast, trash can be placed in a transporter bag lined with a clear liner. Menu items are designed to be easy to serve, and to minimize the burden of clean-up. SchoolFood provides paper towels and encourages using them as a placemat during service to facilitate the clean-up.

Q10. Will the disposal of milk need to be separated as it is in the cafeteria? If so who is responsible bringing the buckets up and down?
   A. Opened milk containers can be discarded in the trash bag provided in each classroom. We only send enough milk for the students who want it.

Q11. Will schools still receive funding for a School Aide in the morning?
   A. School Aides are on the Principal’s payroll, it is up to the principal to schedule their time accordingly. If a school aide was on breakfast duty, the School Food Service Manager and Principal need to agree on the School Aide’s schedule.

Q12. Do schools with Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) programs have to worry about problems with pests?
   A. SchoolFood’s Integrated Pest Management team works hard to ensure schools do not have problems with pests. SchoolFood has not seen any correlation between Breakfast in the Classroom and an increase in inspection failures related to food in the classroom. In fact, many have noticed that BIC has encouraged students to be neater.

Q13. Some parents drop off children early. In the past, these children ate breakfast in the cafeteria. If breakfast is now being served in the classroom, will we still have early drop off? What will children do in the cafeteria if they are not eating?
   A. Yes. Many principals who currently have Breakfast in the Classroom in their schools continue to use the cafeteria as an early drop off location. Children can spend their time before class on several activities, including reading, talking with friends, reviewing homework, or playing appropriate board games.
Q14. Over 50% of students in my school come by school bus and arrive early. Can I continue to serve them breakfast in cafeteria?

A. No. Breakfast in the Classroom replaces breakfast in schools that open approximately 20 minutes or less before the school day begins. These schools may continue to use the cafeteria as a student drop-off location. Otherwise, schools that open between 7am and 7:45 am, respectively, may qualify for the Grab and Go Hybrid delivery method. School opening hours vary therefore Grab and Go Hybrid delivery is dependent on the school opening schedule. Speak to your SchoolFood supervisor to find out whether your school qualifies.

Q15. Can I open my school later now that I will have BIC at my school?

A. Principals must maintain the same school opening schedule as it did prior to BIC in order to reduce disruption to families and to avoid any potential conflicts in school bus arrangements. BIC does not affect the start of the instructional school day. Session times remain the same. Contact the session time administrator for related questions. To discuss this option further, contact your Borough Field Support Center Operations Manager, and contact your Superintendent to obtain approval.

Q16. Is someone available to speak to my parent community about this initiative?

A. Please send feedback, questions and concerns to BreakfastintheClassroom@schools.nyc.gov. The appropriate office will contact you to coordinate what day and time a BIC food tasting and Q&A session may be scheduled at your school for your PTA and or SLT.

Q17. Are any of the school staff permitted to take BIC breakfasts?

A. Absolutely! SchoolFood’s most supportive advocates are those who eat our food. Any adult assigned to the classroom during breakfast are strongly encouraged to participate in BIC in the classroom with their students. Nurses may pick up a breakfast from a SchoolFood staff member in the kitchen. Non-classroom staff are ineligible to take BIC breakfasts.

Q18. Does SchoolFood have a food allergy policy?

A. Yes. The food allergy policy can be found at this link on the SchoolFood website. The major common food allergens are:

Milk, Eggs, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Soy, Wheat, Fish, and Shellfish

SchoolFood staff will be working closely with school nurses to ensure that the needs of students with food allergies are met. The daily menu offers more than one option for students to enjoy. At this link, please find an Office of School Health Allergy FAQ that you can back-packing home to families which answers parents’ frequently asked questions about allergy protocols and procedures, also available on page 12 of this toolkit.
Managing Your Child’s Allergies at School

Approximately 4-6% of children have a food allergy; food allergies are the most common cause of anaphylaxis (a life-threatening allergic reaction) in children at school. The NYC Department of Education does not provide a nut, milk or other allergen-free school environment or food service because the risk of accidental exposure is always present. No school can guarantee an allergen-free environment.

We want to ensure that your child receives the best care possible while at school. We take allergies, food safety and student health very seriously. This means that parents, medical providers and the school team need to work together to manage your child’s allergy.

Your Role as the Parent/Caregiver
- The Parent/Caregiver should meet with the school nurse as early as possible to create/review the Allergy Response Plan and determine what foods the student can eat from the cafeteria.
  - For your reference, the SchoolFood menus can be found at this link.
- Ask your child’s doctor to complete these forms:
  - Allergy/Anaphylaxis Medication Administration Form (MAF)
  - Medical Review of Student with Severe Allergies Form
  Make sure that the emergency contact information on these forms is up to date. Give the completed forms to the school nurse.
- Give the school nurse any medications prescribed by your doctor for managing your child’s allergy.
  - If an epi-pen is prescribed, the school will work to ensure that the epi-pen is kept near your child – in the classroom, lunchroom and on the playground. Or, if your child is able to use the epi-pen by him/herself, then your child will be permitted to carry the epi-pen. The school nurse will also have an epi-pen available in the nurse’s office.
- Give the school nurse a list of foods and ingredients that your child needs to avoid.
- Let your school nurse know if your child has asthma, since allergic reactions may be worse in children who have both allergies and asthma.
- Teach your child about their allergy so that they know which foods to avoid.
- Make sure your child knows not to trade food with other students and not to eat anything offered in school without knowing what is in it.

Your Child’s Role
- If your child is able to use an epi-pen by him/herself, then your child should carry the epi-pen at all times.
- Your child should wash hands before and after handling food, should not trade food with others, and should not eat anything offered in school without knowing what is in it.
Sample BIC Menu

School Team Role
- The school nurse and school physician will work with your child’s doctor and the school staff to create a prevention and response plan for your child.
- Your child’s school will ensure that students with food allergies are included in all school activities.
- Schools should consider prevention strategies, including:
  - “Allergy-aware” seating during meals and snacks in both the cafeteria and the classroom
  - Designated food-free zones
  - Avoiding the use of allergens in class projects, celebrations and snacks
- School staff members will be trained to respond to possible allergic reactions, including how to use an epi-pen.
- If an allergic reaction occurs, a member of the school staff will:
  - Notify the school nurse if allergic reaction occurs and call EMS/911
  - Contact you and your child’s medical provider
BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM: PARENTS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Why did NYC decide to expand the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program?
A. BIC was introduced to DOE elementary schools in an effort to alleviate hunger and ensure that all students are ready to learn each day following the success of the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program in over 300 NYC public schools and in major cities around the country.

Q2. Why was my child’s school selected to participate in BIC?
A. The citywide BIC rollout began its implementation in Kindergarten through 5th grade because of the essential role nutrition plays in the healthy cognitive, social and emotional development of elementary school children. Participating BIC schools typically have a small number of students eating breakfast and have a high number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. By moving breakfast into the classroom, breakfast participation among children in need systematically increases from an average of 30% to 80% or more at BIC schools.

Q3. How does BIC work?
A. Principals at participating BIC schools select from several available BIC delivery methods. For example, packaged breakfasts may be brought directly to classrooms by SchoolFood staff or students may pick up bagged breakfasts on the way up to their classroom in the “grab and go” model. Once in the classroom, students eat at their desk while the teacher conducts morning activities (e.g.: takes morning attendance, reviews the day’s lesson plan, and reads announcements). Trash is placed into a lined, insulated transporter bag that is collected at the agreed upon time and it is returned to the kitchen for disposal. No food is left inside the classroom.

Q4. What are the advantages of BIC?
A. Increasing the number of children who eat and are therefore ready to learn supports the quality of instructional time for all students. The quality of instruction time gained in class is optimized when teachers spend less time redirecting children who may misbehave or feel sick because they are hungry. Teachers report an increases in children’s class participation, self-control, concentration, and student attendance among the social, emotional and behavioral benefits. It is also said that children make fewer visits to the nurse.

Q5. Is my child required to participate in BIC?
A. No. Children are not required to participate in BIC. Parents whose children eat before arriving to school, have other dietary requirements, or food preferences are encouraged to inform their child’s teacher about whether they want their child to participate in the program.

Q6. May my child bring breakfast from home to eat in the classroom?
A. The principal of your child’s school will determine whether your child may bring food from home to eat in the classroom.
Q7. Why does my child need to have a second breakfast when they already eat breakfast at home?

A. Eating two breakfasts is discouraged. Parents are asked to inform their child’s teacher about whether he or she typically eats breakfast in the mornings before coming to school so that the child will not receive a second breakfast. Participating families typically, either: (1) want their children to eat school breakfasts; (2) cannot afford to provide breakfast; or (3) do not have time to prepare breakfast before dropping their child off at school.

Q8. I am concerned with the amount of waste that is being produced at the school because of BIC?

A. BIC program is aligned with the DOE and NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) commitment to increase recycling and decrease contamination of recyclables and compostables, resulting in less waste generated in our schools overall. At BIC schools that are part of the Zero Waste initiative, sorting of the waste is performed by SchoolFood staff to ensure the dual recycling streams and organics are properly disposed.

Q9. Is the BIC food being served healthy?

A. Yes. SchoolFood is providing delicious, high quality breakfasts that exceed the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Nutrition Standards for School Meals. Each breakfast includes two servings of grain and fruit every day and students may also request cereal and milk. The SchoolFood manager at your school can provide you with the comprehensive list of prohibited ingredients such as food coloring, which studies show contributes to reduced cognitive development. Please visit http://schoolfoodnyc.org to see the daily menu options.

Q10. My child has food allergies and I am concerned about my child’s exposure to food in the classroom?

A. The school nurse and other appropriate school personnel work closely with SchoolFood staff and parents to determine if any classroom modifications are needed to make sure that students with food allergies can participate fully in the BIC program, such as allergy friendly seating arrangements. The DOE food allergy policy can be found on the SchoolFood website along with the daily menu options. To minimize allergic reactions, students are encouraged not to trade food with others and to wash their hands before touching or eating food.

Q11. Will my child receive hot food as part of the BIC program?

A. SchoolFood now offers hot food items to eligible schools as part of the BIC program. Please note that hot food will not be available for all BIC delivery options but is available where feasible. Delivery options are chosen by each school’s principal based on what he or she decides best serves the needs of the school community. Delivery option decision by the principal is made during the logistics meeting SchoolFood has with the principal prior to BIC beginning at the school.