

Questions and Answers on the Breakfast After the Bell Legislative Mandate

Have questions about the Breakfast After the Bell mandate? The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and Project Bread are here to help! The following questions are intended to assist you as you choose and implement Breakfast After the Bell programs. Please reach out to DESE and Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program with any additional questions you may have.

WHAT IS THE "ACT REGARDING BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL" LEGISLATION?

The bill contains language directing high-need public schools to offer school breakfast after the instructional day has begun. Specifically, all public schools where at least 60% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program are required to offer all students breakfast after the beginning of the instructional day.

WHEN DO I HAVE TO IMPLEMENT BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL?

The mandate went into effect in the 22-23 school year. The intent of the legislation is for schools to implement a breakfast model after the beginning of the instructional day has begun. DESE will be reviewing school compliance and providing technical assistance during Administrative Reviews. Project Bread can provide technical assistance at any time. Mandated schools should be offering all students breakfast after the beginning of the instructional day. If a school is not in compliance with the mandate, they should reach out to Project Bread for technical assistance and implementation support as soon as possible.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL?

Breakfast After the Bell is one of the best ways to increase participation in the National School Breakfast Program by increasing access for all students. Breakfast After the Bell is particularly important for students that often miss traditional breakfast because of transportation constraints, work schedules, or the stigma associated with arriving early for a school meal. After the Bell models build breakfast into the school day and help create a culture where eating breakfast is the norm. Additional information about benefits can be [found here](#).

WHERE CAN I SERVE BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL?

You have options! Any school breakfast being served after the instructional day has begun will meet the requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, keeping the cafeteria open during first or second period, serving breakfast in the classroom, or serving breakfast at a kiosk conveniently located around school. Models that serve students outside of the cafeteria are typically more accessible and achieve higher participation.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED "AFTER THE BELL" AND HOW LONG DOES BREAKFAST HAVE TO BE OFFERED?

"After the Bell" constitutes breakfast served any time after the morning tardy bell. As long as students are served breakfast after the morning tardy bell, there is no specific duration that is required. However, schools should ensure that students have ample time to enjoy their breakfasts.

MY ADMINISTRATION IS CONCERNED ABOUT TIME ON LEARNING, WHAT MODEL SHOULD I USE?

Aside from being the most effective in increasing participation, Breakfast in the Classroom also allows flexibility with time on learning. Up to fifteen minutes of breakfast time may be counted towards time on learning if a teacher is leading instructional activities, which can include taking attendance, checking homework, overseeing solo reading time, or beginning the day's learning.

WHICH BREAKFAST MODEL WILL INCREASE PARTICIPATION THE MOST?

While all Breakfast After the Bell models increase participation, those that make access seamless tend to be the most effective. Breakfast in the Classroom, where meals are delivered directly to small groups of students in class, tends to yield the highest participation rates. However, if Breakfast in the Classroom is not a good fit for your school, robust Grab and Go breakfast models with multiple pickup locations can be very effective.

DO WE HAVE TO CHOOSE JUST ONE ALTERNATIVE BREAKFAST MODEL?

Some schools have had success with hybrid models, offering Breakfast After the Bell through multiple avenues or at multiple times. Hybrid approaches are often seen at schools serving many grade levels, where groups of students may have different schedules and breakfast needs. For example, pre-K students may receive Breakfast in the Classroom while older grades participate in a Second Chance Breakfast during a scheduled morning break at the same school.

IS THERE A WAIVER AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOLS UNABLE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENT?

DESE will be reviewing school compliance during the Administrative Review and will connect with the district if they do not meet the requirement. The requirement to provide breakfast after the beginning of the instructional day may be waived for a period of 1 year by DESE if a public school demonstrates that in the previous academic year it consistently met an 80 % or higher breakfast participation rate with its current delivery model. Additionally, if the school demonstrates an extreme hardship to implementation, as determined by DESE, a waiver may be granted permitting the district shall demonstrate progress towards implementation within 3 months.

IS THERE FUNDING AVAILABLE TO ASSIST SCHOOLS TO MEET THIS REQUIREMENT?

Yes. There are typically grants available throughout the school year through a variety of avenues. Project Bread often offers implementation grants to support equipment and other costs associated with Breakfast After the Bell. Funding opportunities may be found at <https://www.projectbread.org/grant-opportunities>

I NEED HELP CHOOSING AND IMPLEMENTING A BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL MODEL. WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE?

Project Bread's Child Nutrition team is available to assist schools to select and implement Breakfast After the Bell models. Please see contact information at the bottom of this flyer.

I AM STRUGGLING TO GET PRINCIPALS AND STAKEHOLDERS ON BOARD. CAN PROJECT BREAD'S CHILD NUTRITION TEAM HELP ME WITH THIS?

Yes. Project Bread's Child Nutrition team has helped many schools through these challenges, has resources to assist with this and can help you strategize one-on-one. In addition, through our School Breakfast [Peer-to-Peer](#) Initiative, our staff can connect your stakeholders with others in districts who have successfully transitioned to Breakfast After the Bell models.

WILL A SCHOOL BE IMPACTED IF IT REACHES 60% FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE ELIGIBLE STUDENTS AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR?

No. The requirement is intended to apply to schools that have been previously identified as having a student population of at least 60% free and reduced-price eligible students. DESE has made the determinations based on previously submitted data. [This list is the most current list released by DESE.](#)

WHAT WILL FUTURE YEARS LOOK LIKE? WILL THERE BE A NEW MANDATED LIST EVERY YEAR?

DESE anticipates releasing a new mandated list annually. Since this is a permanent legislative mandate, any school that is identified as having at least 60% free and reduced-price eligible students in future years will be mandated for the following school year.

CAN I IMPLEMENT BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM (BIC) IN JUST ONE CLASSROOM OR GRADE LEVEL AND STILL MEET THE REQUIREMENT?

The intent of the budget language is to offer school breakfast in a way that reaches all students. While selecting BIC for a class or groups of classes is a great way to increase participation for students in those classes, it does not improve access for all students. Offering another model (such as grab & go kiosks, or a robust second chance breakfast) in addition to an isolated rollout of BIC would comply with the law and be a better way to reach all students after the bell.

CAN I EXTEND THE HOURS OF OPERATION OF MY BEFORE THE BELL CAFETERIA MODEL TO BEYOND THE TARDY BELL?

The intent of the budget language is to offer school breakfast in a way that reaches all students and, ultimately, results in a significant increase in participation at mandated schools. Extending a before the bell model to reach only students that are tardy does not reach all students, is not an effective way to increase participation, and is not in compliance with the spirit of the requirement. While you may utilize the cafeteria to serve Breakfast After the Bell, the extension should be implemented such that all students can access the program. Please refer to the [Second Chance Breakfast Quick Guide](#) for more information on how to implement a robust second chance breakfast model. For more information on other models, explore our [Grab & Go Breakfast Quick Guide](#) and [Breakfast in the Classroom Quick Guide](#).

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