



TAKE AWAYS

- Nudges are a technique that schools can add into their morning routine to increase breakfast participation.
- Any school staff can participate in nudges. High schools can even have student leaders participate.
- Schools with low, medium, and high Free and Reduced Price Lunch enrollments, and schools using either traditional or alternative breakfast models, can benefit from nudges.

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BREAKFAST NUDGES

One method schools can incorporate into their plan to increase school breakfast participation is “Nudges.” Nudges are subtle acts of positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions that try to influence a student’s behavior. Nudges can take on many forms, but a common approach is to have school staff ask students if they’ve had breakfast that morning. For example, a principal asks students in the hallway before school starts, “Have you had breakfast today?” This simple technique has been shown to effectively increase participation in the program.

RESEARCH

No Kid Hungry conducted a pilot of 23 schools in Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland and North Carolina to determine if breakfast participation rates would be affected by incorporating the nudge technique. The schools in the pilot utilized a traditional cafeteria breakfast model, rather than a Breakfast After the Bell program, and had free and reduced rates of less than 55 percent. The schools implemented the nudge technique during 3-4 week periods, during which pre- and post- data were collected. **The results of the pilot showed that 95 percent of the schools increased their breakfast participation.** The top 10 schools experienced an average of 23 percent increase. The top schools also had a principal or counselor directly involved in implementing the nudge technique, which was a key factor in increasing breakfast participation. Urging staff to encourage students to eat breakfast would likely be an effective practice in higher need schools as well.



HOW TO INCORPORATE NUDGES:

- Any school staff can participate in breakfast nudges. In high schools, student leaders can participate as well.
- Simply inquire about and encourage students to eat breakfast. This can be done in the hallway as students are walking to class, as students arrive in their first period classroom, or as they come off of the school bus.
- Practice nudges for at least 3-4 weeks to see an impact on breakfast participation.
- Make breakfast nudges a part of the school morning routine.



NUDGES IN ACTION

Many of the schools participating in the pilot found that nudges helped them approach school breakfast in a new way. Debbie Settles, PE teacher at Town Creek Elementary in Town Creek, MD, commented that “nudges have people asking the kids if they’ve had breakfast, which is something we hadn’t really done before.” Emily Kirchner, School Counselor of North Bend Elementary School in Harford, MD, said, “the cafeteria staff saw at least 3-4 new students who really didn’t know about breakfast go [to the cafeteria],” and attributes it to the nudges the teachers were providing.



Additionally, many of the schools involved in the pilot found creative ways to implement nudges. Food and Nutrition Service staff at Daniel of St. Thomas Jennifer Elementary School in Waldorf, MD wore aprons as a nudge tactic. School counselor Amanda Zimmermann said the aprons ended up being a conversation starter for school breakfast. Students in Odenton Elementary School in Odenton, MD held up signs before school saying “did you know you could have breakfast?” Principal Tracey Ahern commented that it brought more attention to the school breakfast program.

