

SCHOOL NUTRITION 101

The Cost of School Breakfast



Many people, especially those unhappy with the food served at school, may wonder why schools serve the food they do. Below is an overview of how a typical school nutrition program works, and some things to think about before approaching your school nutrition professional.

- Unlike other school departments, the school nutrition program does not receive money from the school budget. It is expected to be self-funding, meaning that it must bring in enough revenue from food sales to support its day-to-day operations.
- School nutrition program costs include food, labor (salary and benefits), overhead (pest control for the cafeteria, utilities, maintenance of kitchen equipment, garbage collection, etc.), and expenses associated with running the food service department (ordering and inventory, processing and filing meal applications).
- Usually what students pay for their meals doesn't fully cover the expenses to run the food service. To help cover costs, the federal government provides reimbursements to school districts. In 2013-14, the School Breakfast Program federal reimbursements were:*

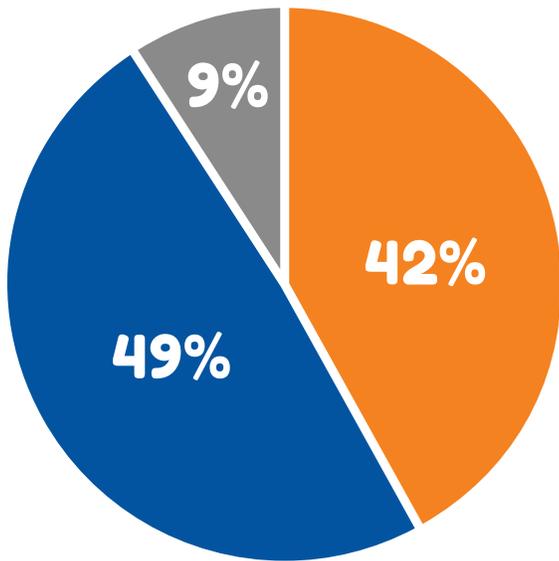
2013-214 School Year	Federal Reimbursement Rates**	Student Meal Cost	Maximum Total Revenue per Meal
Free Breakfast	\$1.58	\$0	\$1.58
Reduced Price Breakfast	\$1.28	<\$0.30	\$1.58
Paid Breakfast	\$0.28	varies typically \$1.30-2.00	varies typically \$1.58-2.28

*To access the most current reimbursement rates, visit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/naps/naps.htm>

**Schools where at least 40 percent of the lunches served during the same period two years prior were free and reduced price may qualify for extra "severe need" reimbursements of \$0.31 per free or reduced-price breakfast served.

- The actual amount spent on food varies by school district; in most cases, about 42 percent of the cost of School Breakfast can be attributed to food. So, if a school receives \$1.58 to serve a free/reduced-price breakfast, only 66 cents of that is available to purchase food.

- Of the money left over to purchase food, about 20 cents must be used to purchase milk, which is required at breakfast. That leaves about 46 cents to purchase the rest of the meal.
- Given those facts, imagine going to the grocery store and trying to purchase a full breakfast for 46 cents. Try also to keep this in mind when going to speak with your school nutrition department!



FOOD SERVICE COST

- 42% Food
- 49% Labor
- 9% Overhead & Administrative

Adapted from Start School with Breakfast: A Guide to Increasing School Breakfast Participation. NEA Health Information Network and Share Our Strength, 2011. Available at: <http://www.neahin.org> and <http://www.strength.org>

