

# Ohio School Breakfast Program



## Implementation and Effectiveness for School Year 2023-2024

December 2023



**Department of  
Education &  
Workforce**

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# Implementation and Effectiveness of the Ohio School Breakfast Program

## Executive Summary

This report illustrates annual data and trends for the School Breakfast Program in Ohio. Statewide data from the 2022-2023 school year shows an increase in total breakfasts served, as well as an increase in breakfast participation relative to school enrollment when compared to pre-pandemic school years. Participation rates for both the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program increased in the 2022-2023 school year compared to pre-pandemic school years 2018 and 2019 data. Cafeteria service remains the most popular breakfast service model for the 2023-2024 school year; however, more than half of all school sites also offer an alternative breakfast service option.

State law<sup>1</sup> requires the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to report on the implementation and effectiveness of the School Breakfast Program using the following data measures:

- (1) The number of students and participation rates in the free and reduced-price breakfast program for each school building;
- (2) The type of breakfast model used by each school building taking part in the breakfast program; and
- (3) The number of students and participation rates in the free and reduced-price lunch program for each school building.

In school year 2021-2022, using U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) child nutrition program waivers, nearly all Ohio schools operated breakfast and lunch meal services through the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). This allowed all students to receive no-cost meals. The waivers allowing the Seamless Summer Option expired on June 30, 2022. The expiration of the waivers led to a transition back to traditional in-school meal service for the 2022-2023 school year forward. The data in this report reflect these year-to-year operational transitions.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce prepared this report with data collected through the Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS).

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.818

## Impact of COVID-19 on the School Breakfast Program

Ohio’s strategic plan for overcoming the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, [Future Forward Ohio](#), and Ohio’s [Whole Child Framework](#) recognize student wellness as a priority and that each child is unique and has basic needs—including nutrition—that must be met to enable learning. As discussed previously, most schools operating child nutrition programs in the 2021-2022 school year changed traditional meal service operations to help diminish the spread of COVID-19 while continuing to provide nutritious meals. These waivers expired on June 30, 2022.

Although USDA permitted waivers in school year 2022-2023 allowing non-congregate meals in COVID school closure situations, no Ohio schools utilized these waivers. Therefore, school year 2022-2023 was the first school year with non-waiver in-person “traditional” School Breakfast and Lunch data since the 2018-2019 school year. Resources regarding prior school year meal service flexibilities are available on the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce’s [Food and Nutrition Waivers webpage](#).

## School Breakfast Program Background

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce’s Office of Nutrition administers U.S. Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Programs in Ohio. Piloted by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, the School Breakfast Program reimburses public and nonpublic schools that serve nutritious breakfasts to children in prekindergarten through grade 12. The U.S. Congress made the School Breakfast Program permanent in 1975. In a traditional school year, Ohio schools taking part in the program collectively serve more than 71 million breakfasts to 1.7 million enrolled children<sup>2</sup>.

Research shows that healthy, nutritious diets help children grow and succeed, and healthy meals are an important factor in school performance. Evidence shows that regularly eating breakfast before or during school significantly correlates with positive academic outcomes<sup>3</sup> for children. A good diet gives children better verbal skills, better memory and a more consistent focus in the classroom. Additionally, breakfast positively correlates with student attendance. Research shows that students who receive breakfast also regularly attend nearly two more days of school per year than students who go hungry<sup>4</sup>.

## Schools that Adopt Breakfast Programs

This report illustrates three types of data:

1. The total percentage of schools offering morning meals through the Ohio School Breakfast Program;
2. The program participation rate at those schools; and

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Monthly meal counts in the Ohio Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System

<sup>3</sup> Hossein M. et al (2019). The relationship of breakfast and snack foods with cognitive and academic performance and physical activity levels of adolescent students. *Biological Rhythm Research*

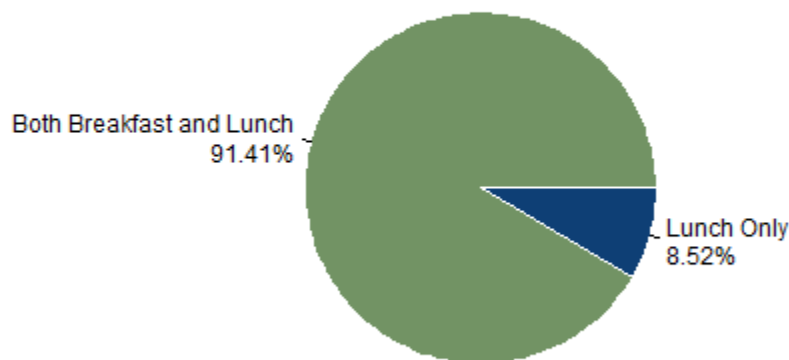
<sup>4</sup> Taras H. (2005). Nutrition and student performance at school. *Journal of School Health*

3. The numbers of schools feeding students under a variety of breakfast service models.

The report includes trends in Ohio School Breakfast Program eligibility and participation. The graphs in this report show both past and current Ohio School Breakfast Program data. See the [full data set for each school building](#) included in this report on the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce’s website.

In the 2023-2024 school year, **2,852 Ohio school sites** offer USDA nutrition programs. Of those, **more than 91% of these schools** operate both the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program.

**School Breakfast (SBP) and School Lunch (NSLP)  
Program Adoption**



## School Breakfast Participation

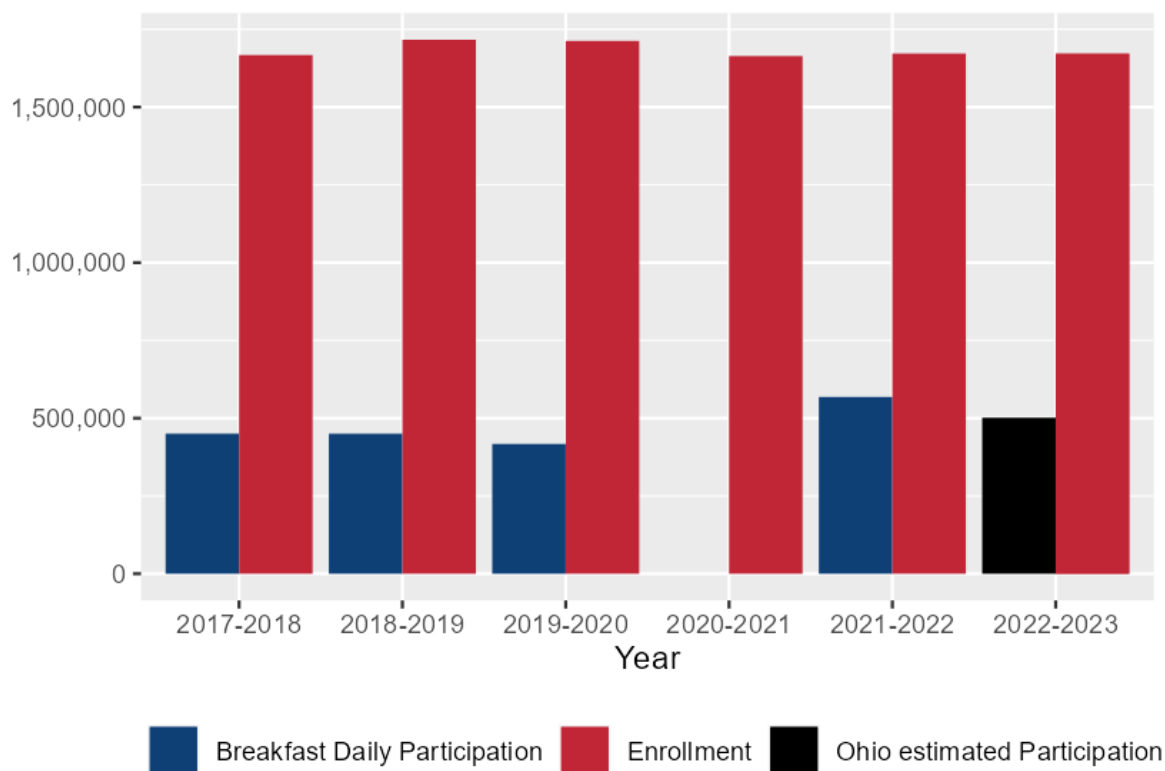
Using data from the 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023 school years, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce divided School Breakfast Program average daily participation<sup>5</sup> (blue or black bar below) by Ohio’s statewide student enrollment<sup>6</sup> (red bar) to calculate the percentage of students who take part in the School Breakfast Program.

Due to March 2020 COVID-19-related school closures, school year 2019-2020 data used for this analysis is through February 2020. Due to school participation in the Seamless Summer Option or the Summer Food Service Program, School Breakfast Program participation data for the 2020-2021 school year is not available. Complete enrollment data for the 2023-2024 school year is not yet available.

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

<sup>6</sup> Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Report Portal

## School Breakfast Daily Participation vs Enrollment



School Breakfast Program participation rates for 2018-2023 are as follows:

- 2017-2018: 27%
- 2018-2019: 26.2%
- 2019-2020: 24.4%
- 2020-2021: Not calculated due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2021-2022: 34%
- 2022-2023: 30.6%<sup>7</sup>

School Breakfast Program participation rates have increased across the five-year sample when comparing school years with traditional in-school meal service despite a decline in overall statewide school enrollment. **In school year 2021-2022, schools offered no-cost breakfasts to all students under the Seamless Summer Option, which may have contributed to the abnormally increased participation rate that school year.** See the full [data set for each school building](#) on the Department website.

### Breakfast Model in Each School as of October 2023

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce annually collects data from each school that serves breakfast. Schools report the breakfast models they are using in each building. During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, many schools shifted service models from traditional cafeteria settings to alternative service model methods in response to COVID-19

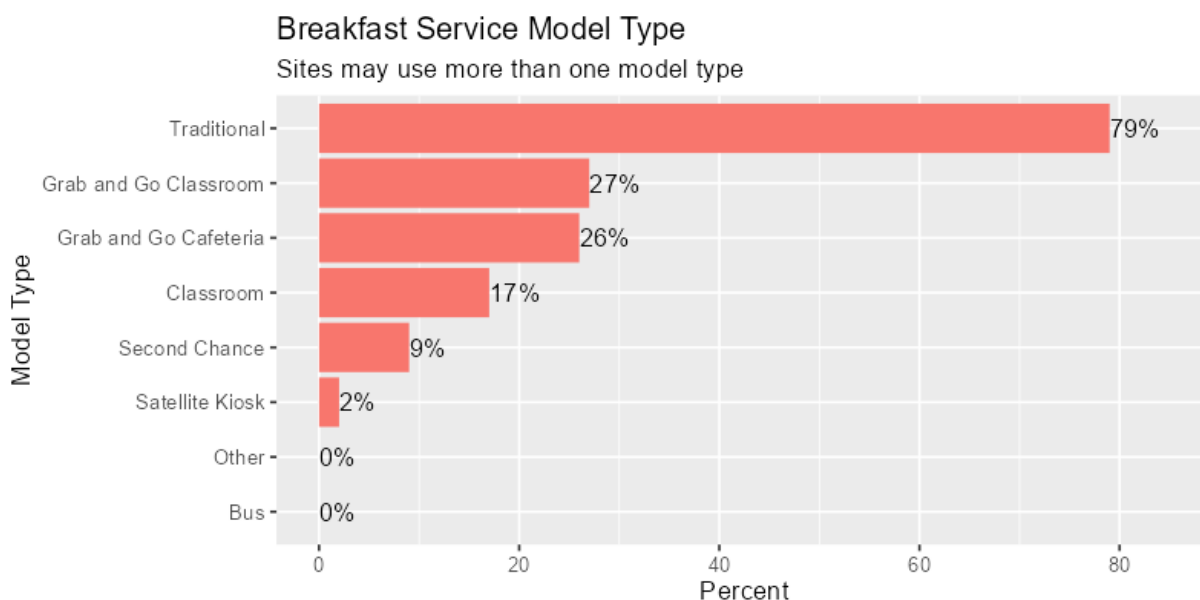
<sup>7</sup> Participation numbers not yet published by USDA; estimated using Ohio October 2022 participation data.

protocols. Schools transitioned back to in-person School Breakfast Program meal service for the 2022-2023 school year; however, the data indicates many schools continued to utilize alternative service model methods in some settings.

For the 2023-2024 school year, Ohio schools provided breakfast service model responses. The data and graph below reflect the breakfast service models used at each school as of October 2023<sup>8</sup>.

Breakfast models include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Traditional*: Breakfast served in the cafeteria on a traditional serving line before the school day begins;
- *Breakfast in the Classroom*: Bagged or boxed breakfasts served in the cafeteria or classroom. Students can eat in the classroom before or during the first class period;
- *Second-Chance Breakfast*: Students eat breakfast after the school day begins, generally after the first period, in the cafeteria;
- *Satellite Breakfast/Breakfast Kiosk*: Students pick up bagged breakfasts in the hallway on their way to classes;
- *Grab and Go – Cafeteria*: Students pick up bagged breakfasts and eat in the cafeteria; or
- *Grab and Go – Classroom*: Students pick up bagged breakfasts and eat in the classroom.

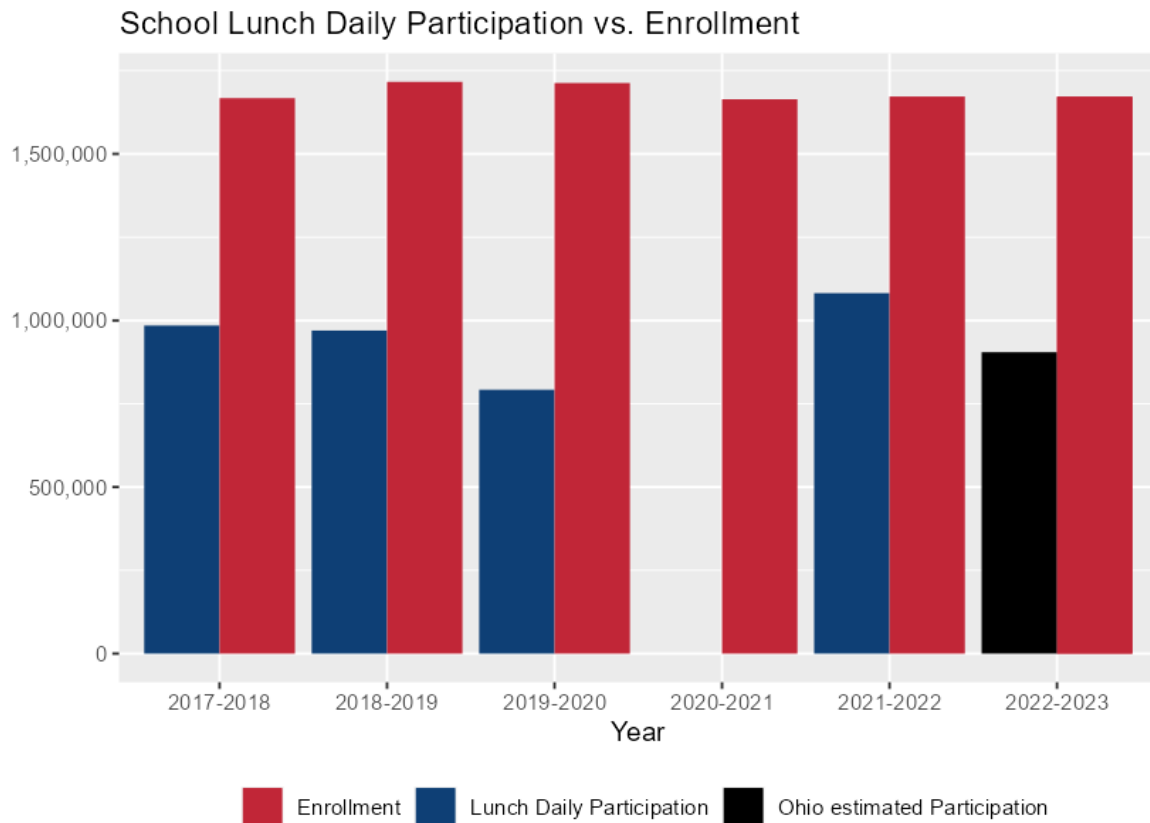


## School Lunch Program Participation

Using data from the 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023 school years, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce reviewed total statewide enrollment and National School Lunch Program participation to determine participation rates. The participation rate is determined by

<sup>8</sup> Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System. Data last accessed on Nov. 30, 2023.

dividing National School Lunch Program average daily participation<sup>9</sup> (blue or black bar below) by the statewide school enrollment for Ohio<sup>10</sup> (red bar). Due to March 2020 COVID-19-related school closures, school year 2019-2020 data used for this analysis is through February 2020. Due to school participation in the Seamless Summer Option or the Summer Food Service Program, School Lunch Program participation data for the 2020-2021 school year is not available. Complete enrollment data for the 2023-2024 school year is not yet available.



School Lunch Program participation rates for 2018-2023 are as follows:

- 2017-2018: 59.1%;
- 2018-2019: 56.5%;
- 2019-2020: 46.2%;
- 2020-2021: Not calculated due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2021-2022: 64.7%.
- 2022-2023: 54.1%<sup>11</sup>.

**In school year 2021-2022, schools offered no-cost lunches to all students under the Seamless Summer Option, which may have contributed to the abnormally increased participation rate that school year.** See the full [data set for each school building](#) on the Department website.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

<sup>10</sup> Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Report Portal

<sup>11</sup> Participation numbers not yet published by USDA; estimated using Ohio October 2022 participation data.



## Summary

This report illustrates the statewide implementation and effectiveness of school breakfast in Ohio. The full data set for each school building is available on the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce website. In the 2023-2024 school year, more than 91% of Ohio schools with USDA nutrition programs serve breakfast. In the 2022-2023 school year, 30.6% of enrolled children participated in the School Breakfast Program and 54.1% participated in the National School Lunch Program. Both percentages increased compared to pre-pandemic (2019-2020) participation data. Waivers which enabled COVID-response flexibilities expired in June 2022, resulting in a transition back to in-school School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program operations for the 2022-2023 school year. In School Year 2023-2024, traditional breakfast service remains the most popular breakfast model, followed by Grab and Go – Classroom or Grab and Go – Cafeteria.