

# Ohio School Breakfast Program



## Implementation and Effectiveness for School Year 2024-2025

December 2024



**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 2024-2025 school year shows an increase in total sites serving breakfast compared to the 2023-2024 school year.
- In school year 2024-2025, cafeteria service remains the most popular breakfast service model; however, more than half of all school sites also offer an alternative breakfast service option.
- Statewide data from the 2023-2024 school year shows an increase in total breakfasts served compared to the 2022-2023 school year data.
- In the 2024-2025 school year, approximately 94% of Ohio schools with USDA nutrition programs serve breakfast. In the 2023-2024 school year, 27.2% of enrolled children participated in the School Breakfast Program and 54.5% participated in the National School Lunch Program.

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

The Department prioritizes student wellness, acknowledging that each child is unique with basic needs — including nutrition — that must be met to facilitate learning.

Due to federal waivers in child nutrition programs in the 2021-2022 school year which offered all schools the temporary option to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students, school years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 were the first two school years 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](#). During school year 2021-2022 no-cost meal waivers contributed to unusual increases in school breakfast and school lunch meals served and participation compared to standard school meal service years.

## School Breakfast Program Background

The DEW 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>1</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

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Monthly meal counts in the Ohio Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System

during school significantly correlates with positive academic outcomes<sup>2</sup> for children. A healthy diet can assist children in building 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>3</sup>.

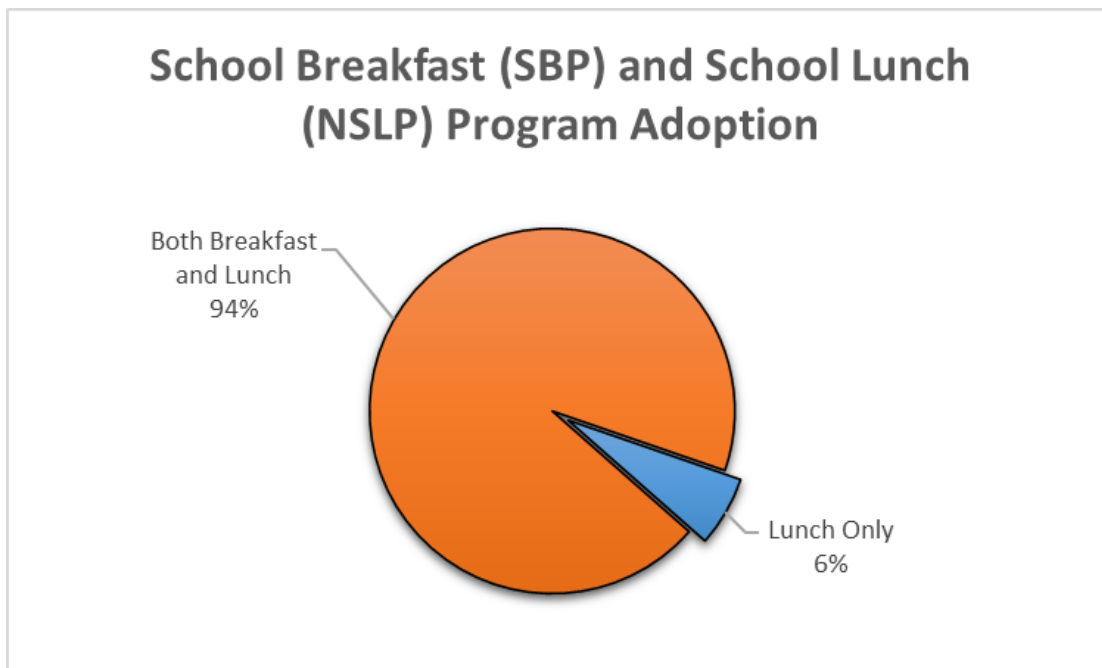
## Schools that Adopt Breakfast Programs

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.
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, with graphs reporting both past and current data. See the [full data set for each school building](#) included in this report on the Department's website.

In the 2024-2025 school year, 3,552 **Ohio school sites** offer USDA nutrition programs. Of those schools, **94%** operate both the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program.



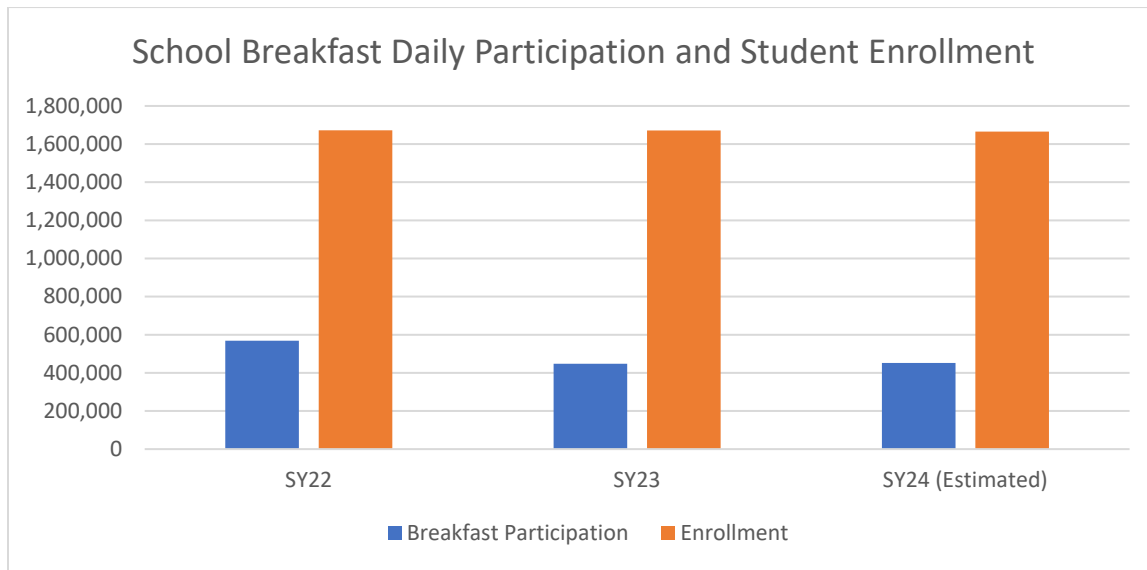
<sup>2</sup> Hossein M. et al (2019). The relationship of breakfast and snack foods with cognitive and academic performance and physical activity levels of adolescent students. *Biological Rhythm Research*

<sup>3</sup> Taras H. (2005). Nutrition and student performance at school. *Journal of School Health*

## School Breakfast Participation

Using data from the 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 school years, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce illustrated School Breakfast Program average daily participation<sup>4</sup> (blue bar below) and Ohio's statewide student enrollment<sup>5</sup> (orange bar). School Breakfast Program participation rate is defined as School Breakfast Program average daily participation divided by student enrollment, expressed as a percentage.

Complete enrollment data for the 2024-2025 school year is not yet available.



School Breakfast Program participation rates for 2021-2024 are as follows:

- 2021-2022: 34%
- 2022-2023: 26.8%<sup>6</sup>
- 2023-2024: 27.2%<sup>7</sup>

School Breakfast Program participation rates have increased across the three-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.

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Report Portal

<sup>6</sup> USDA published value differs from Ohio estimate in December 2023 Ohio School Breakfast Report

<sup>7</sup> Participation numbers not yet published by USDA; estimated using Ohio October 2023 participation data.

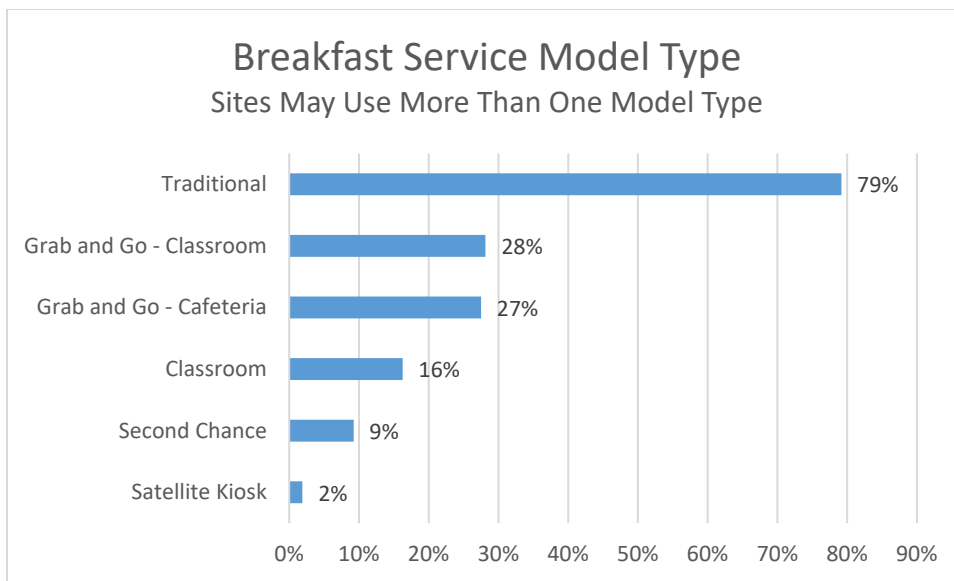
## Breakfast Model in Each School as of October 2024

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 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 2024-2025 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 2024<sup>8</sup>.

Breakfast models reported in October 2024 include the following:

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

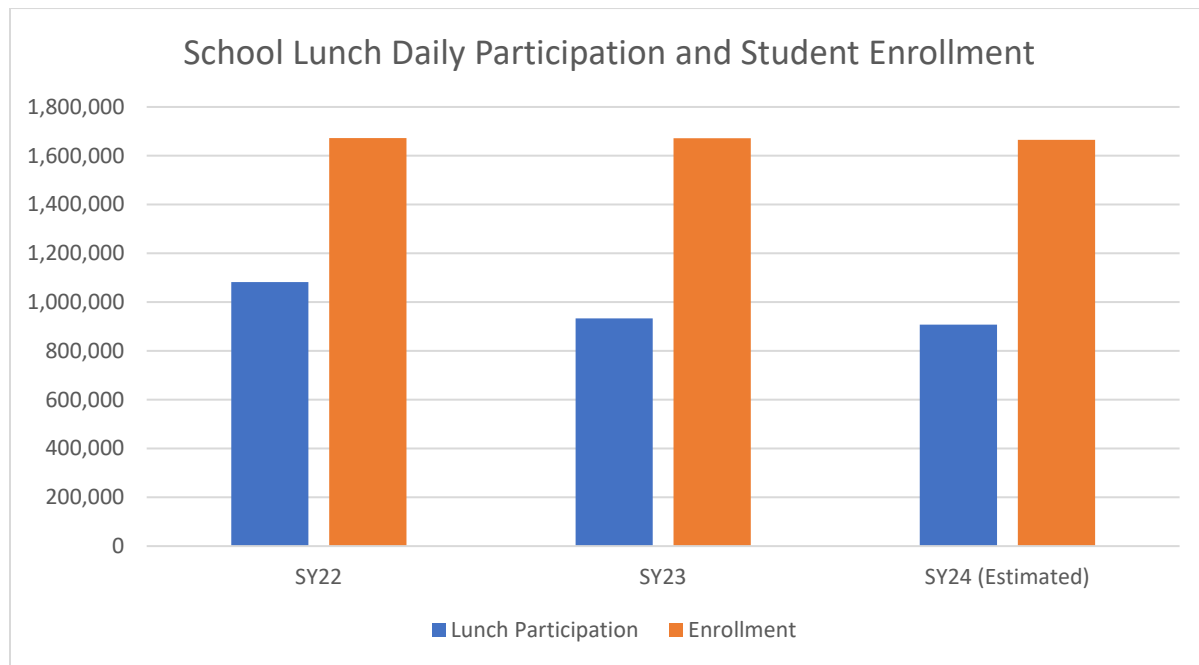


## School Lunch Program Participation

Using data from the 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 school years, the Department reviewed total statewide enrollment and National School Lunch Program participation to determine participation

<sup>8</sup> Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System. Data last accessed on Nov. 30, 2024.

rates. The graph below illustrates National School Lunch Program average daily participation<sup>9</sup> (blue bar below) and statewide school enrollment for Ohio<sup>10</sup> (orange bar). Participation rate is defined as National School Lunch Program average daily participation divided by student enrollment, expressed as a percentage. Complete enrollment data for the 2024-2025 school year is not yet available.



School Lunch Program participation rates for 2022-2024 are as follows:

- 2021-2022: 64.7%
- 2022-2023: 55.8%<sup>11</sup>
- 2023-2024: 54.5%<sup>12</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.

## 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’s website. In the 2024-2025 school year, approximately 94% of Ohio schools with USDA nutrition programs serve breakfast. In the 2023-2024 school year, 27.2% of enrolled children participated in the School Breakfast Program and 54.5% participated in the National School Lunch Program. Waivers that enabled COVID-response flexibilities expired in June 2022, resulting in a transition back to in-school

<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> USDA published value differs from Ohio estimate in December 2023 Ohio School Breakfast Report

<sup>12</sup> Participation numbers not yet published by USDA; estimated using Ohio October 2023 participation data.

School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program operations for the 2022-2023 school year and beyond. In School Year 2024-2025, traditional breakfast service remains the most popular breakfast model, followed by Grab and Go – Classroom or Grab and Go – Cafeteria.