

Scratch-Cooking for Breakfast After the Bell

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (Partners for BIC) came together in 2010 in response to their shared passion for childhood nutrition and the benefits of its potential to improve educational outcomes and child health. Partners for BIC has worked with school districts across the country to increase school breakfast participation through the implementation of free breakfast after the bell models (breakfast in the classroom, “grab and go,” and second chance) that are offered to all students.

This case study highlights how several Partners for BIC school districts are incorporating high-quality scratch- and speed-scratch cooking into their breakfast after the bell programs to enhance meal quality and improve school breakfast participation.

Scratch-Cooking and Breakfast After the Bell

Several school districts that the Partners for BIC have worked with reported the ability to increase scratch- and speed-scratch cooking menu options. Updated equipment allowed for greater menu flexibility while a new breakfast after the bell program increased marketing opportunities for the school nutrition department.

The school districts highlighted in this case study – Austin Independent School District (Texas), Garfield Heights City Schools (Ohio), Charleston County School District (South Carolina) – have implemented scratch- and speed-scratch recipes for breakfast after the bell.

In all of these districts, determining student preferences through student surveys and taste tests helped school nutrition staff develop and refine recipes. Feedback from teachers and custodians also was cited as a helpful tool to determine student preferences; teachers and custodians observe and report when students take more of a particular food item, or if the trash is heavier than usual (indicating a less popular menu item.)

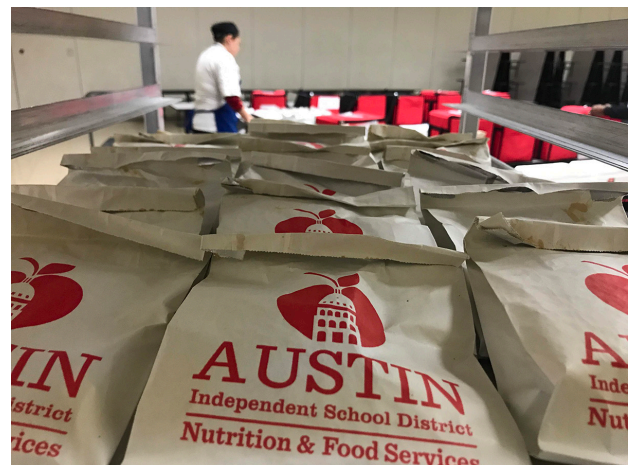
Austin Independent School District (Texas)

Developing scratch- and speed-scratch school breakfast recipes suitable for breakfast in the classroom is an ongoing

effort in Austin Independent School District (Austin ISD). Creating dishes from scratch improves breakfast participation, which improves morale among school nutrition staff. Austin ISD Food Services offers several scratch-, speed-scratch, or both types of items on their breakfast after the bell menu, including a breakfast kolache that requires a multi-day preparation process, yogurt parfaits made with homemade granola, and, when possible, fresh fruit procured from local farmers.

Equipment Development

In addition to boosting participation and staff morale, scratch- and speed-scratch cooking has created unique





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opportunities for Austin ISD Food Services. The district worked with a manufacturer to create equipment solutions for transporting food to the classroom; specifically, inserts for cold transportation bags for yogurt parfait cups to prevent spills and food waste.

In order to serve parfaits during breakfast in the classroom, Austin ISD needed to find a way to transport the clear cups in soft-sided delivery bags without them falling over. The district reached out to a local manufacturer specializing in foam fabrication. Kirkland Sales in Dallas, Texas, developed a foam insert for the district's soft-sided delivery bags; 12 holes were custom-cut into the foam to hold the clear parfait cups upright during transport. Eventually Kirkland began producing and selling these inserts to other school districts as well.

Maximizing Marketing Opportunities

Austin ISD Food Services maximizes marketing opportunities to promote all of their programs, including breakfast after the bell. The Austin ISD logo is instantly recognizable and appears almost anywhere you can imagine: delivery carts, clear fruit bags, soft-sided coolers, infographics and posters, napkins, portion bags, staff apparel, handouts, and posters.



Austin ISD Homemade Granola

In school year 2018–2019, Austin ISD created a simple, in-house granola [recipe](#) to serve with breakfast parfaits, and this is easily replicated in almost any school kitchen; there are just six ingredients.

Charleston County School District (South Carolina)

Providing students' regional favorite flavors, like chicken and biscuits, and grits, helped Charleston County School District (CCSD) find success with scratch- and speed-scratch cooking. Replacing an individually wrapped chicken biscuit sandwich with a speed-scratch version required an increase in labor hours but was met with a welcome [return on investment](#).

The new speed-scratch breakfast sandwich is made with biscuits prepared in-house and paired with a high-quality, whole-muscle breaded chicken. While scratch- and speed-scratch cooking are not possible in every school and every day, CCSD staff is constantly developing and testing recipes to serve as many students as possible. In addition to their popular chicken biscuit sandwich, CCSD also offers on their breakfast after the bell menu the popular "Badabing" bowl – a hearty mix of grits, cheese, and bacon – and a [homemade banana bread](#).

Garfield Heights City Schools (Ohio)

In Garfield Heights City Schools (GHCS), breakfast is prepared in a central kitchen and delivered to "satellite" kitchens for distribution to the classroom. Developing scratch- and speed-scratch recipes has been a key strategy to the success of breakfast after the bell programs in GHCS, with several important benefits for stakeholders:

- improved perception of school food among parents and students;
- increased school breakfast participation;



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- lowered food costs;
- improved staff pride; and
- enhanced program buy-in.

A Partners for BIC grant helped GHCS invest in the equipment that was integral to the program's success: two overwrap machines, housed in the district's central kitchen, allow school nutrition staff to prepare scratch- and speed-scratch meals for delivery to other school sites. GHCS offers [scratch-made items](#), such as cinnamon rolls and omelet sandwiches, on breakfast after the bell menus throughout the school year.

"Instead of buying a new delivery truck, GHCS repurposed the band's instrument truck – which sits idle in the morning when breakfast in the classroom is being served – as a delivery vehicle for the food services department."

Words of Wisdom From Partners for BIC Districts

"We find students' perception of value and their satisfaction are greater when we balance nutrition that is appealing and ultimately fills them up. Protein and whole grains lead to fewer blood sugar spikes, and a feeling of satisfaction."

"Breakfast in the classroom is good for the kids. They love it, especially the kolache. Our participation went way up, and it's good for them – it helps them learn."

"Scratch- and speed-scratch aren't necessarily something we can do at every single school, but we test a recipe completely at a school where breakfast in the classroom is served to see if it's something we can roll out for the program. We pick the schools with the largest BIC numbers because if we can do it there, there is no excuse not to try it at any other school."

"Scratch-cooking gives our employees the satisfaction of making food the kids enjoy. Breakfast sandwiches are so simple – it's no more complicated than putting together a hamburger for lunch – and it's less expensive for us!"

"We utilize scratch-cooking for a variety of reasons. There can be difficulty finding acceptable products. Scratch-cooking can also be a cost-saving measure – if you're using commodities, you can save a lot."

"Although preparation requires a little extra effort and additional labor, it shows the kids we value them and want them to enjoy their meal with us."

About Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom

The Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom (Partners for BIC) is a consortium of national education and nutrition organizations, including the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), the School Nutrition Foundation (SNF), the NEA Foundation, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Foundation.

With the generous support of the Walmart Foundation, Partners for BIC has provided technical assistance and over \$11 million in funding to support the implementation of breakfast after the bell models in more than 500 schools in 70 districts, leading to over 100,000 additional children eating a healthy school breakfast since 2010.

More information on Partners for BIC, as well as information on how to increase participation in your school breakfast program, can be found at breakfastintheclassroom.org.