

Office of Health and Nutrition Services

31a Breakfast Spending Ideas

This document highlights ideas that Sponsors can consider for spending 31a funds in School Breakfast Program (SBP) operations.

Summary Information

[Section 31a \(6\) of the State School Aid Act](#)ⁱ, MCL 388.1631a(5), relates to funds provided to eligible school districts and eligible public-school academies that run a school breakfast program under Section 1272a of the Revised School Code. An amount, not to exceed \$10.00 per eligible pupil, must be used to pay for costs necessary to run the school breakfast program. The amount of the funds for school food service from Section 31a (6) is determined by multiplying \$10.00 by the adjusted free eligible count reported by the Office of State Aid. This amount must be properly allocated to the School Meals Program, Non-profit Food Service Account (NFSA).

This funding does not come directly to the Food Service (FS) program. A portion of the 31a funding must be manually transferred from the General Fund to the FS Fund, typically once per year to support school breakfast.

The amount transferred to FS must match the report filed with Office of Educational Supports at year end, called the Section 31a Annual Program and Fiscal Report (APFR), which is due in July annually.

For information, guidance, coding requirements, and reporting expectations see [State School Aid Act-Sections 31a, 31d, and 31f](#)ⁱⁱ.

Breakfast Menu and Meal Quality

- ❖ **Serve a wider variety of fresh local fruits, and vegetables.** Offer fruits like strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, peaches, and different apple varieties like ambrosia, honey crisp and pink lady. Look for locally sourced frozen fruits, when fresh is not in season. Introduce students to vegetables like asparagus and zucchini.

*All costs must be specific to food service and have stipulations to be allowable. Reach out to MDE for guidelines on allowability, requirements, and sufficient supporting documentation.

- ❖ **Purchase pre-cut and packaged fruits and vegetables like apple slices.** These items are typically more expensive than whole fruits and vegetables but are a convenient option for students and food service staff as they require less prep work.
- ❖ **Offer a meat/meat alternate with breakfast. Try serving** breakfast burritos, for example, or hot breakfast sandwiches.
- ❖ **Offer entrée items that may otherwise be cost-prohibitive like higher quality cuts of meat or items that require more labor.** For example, a build your own egg and veggie bowl.
- ❖ **Adding a simple garnish to a meal creates the look and feel of restaurant-style dining.** Think of adding cut fruit (orange wedges or melon balls) to a plated omelet or pancake meal (this could count as one fruit offering depending on the amount offered). Adding fresh herbs is a simple step to add color to any plate.
 - No Kid Hungry has a whole series of videos that include knife skills, a Mongolian grill idea, and other ideas for elevating the meal prep and plating. <https://state.nokidhungry.org/michigan/cc/>

Breakfast Service and Atmosphere

- ❖ **Refresh the spaces and places where students eat.** * Hire a designer to work with students to improve the atmosphere and functionality of the cafeteria and/or other areas where students eat. Invest in new seating, fresh paint, signage, and art.
- ❖ **Revamp packaging.** Packaging plays a critical role in the appeal of school breakfast meals. Consider how packaging could make your breakfast menu offerings stand out and be more attractive to students. Model the packaging that students are familiar with seeing at fast-casual restaurants. Purchase bento style boxes (segmented boxes with individual compartments for different items), restaurant-style takeout boxes, kraft paper bowls and boxes, etc. For a finishing touch, add branded stickers/labels.
- ❖ **Invest in marketing materials like digital signage and banners.** Promote your breakfast program and current menu offerings to students and families to increase participation.
- ❖ **Upgrade the hardware of your Point of Sale (POS) system.** Consider how functionality can be improved for both staff and students with options like a touchless pin pad, scanner, and/or a portable tablet/handheld for a POS mobile system for breakfast in the classroom and grab and go meal service. Or, add an additional POS access to improve line speed during breakfast meal service.

Breakfast Staffing

- ❖ **Provide staff with uniforms and shoes.** Consider purchasing branded chef coats featuring the school, district, department, or Sponsor logo. This can help boost staff pride and improve student perception of the breakfast program.

*All costs must be specific to food service and have stipulations to be allowable. Reach out to MDE for guidelines on allowability, requirements, and sufficient supporting documentation.

- ❖ **Hire additional breakfast food service staff to expand menu offerings and do more scratch cooking.**
- ❖ **Use funds towards hire a dietician, menu planner, or a student meal advocate to lead menu planning, offer nutrition education, or advocate for breakfast meal access.**
- ❖ **Increase staff wages or offer bonus/incentives to staff if wage increases are not sustainable. ***

Food Service Equipment

See Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) [Pre-approved Food Service Equipment Listⁱⁱⁱ](#) and [When do you Need Pre-Approval for Food Service Equipment Purchases \(Admin Memo #5 2021\)^{iv}](#) for more information on equipment requirements.

- ❖ **Update or add small equipment and/or small wares.** Evaluate all your small equipment and small wares and update or replace worn items. Ask staff what they need to work more efficiently. Consider purchases such as a chopper or sectionizer to save time as well as ease the task for staff, relieving burden on their bodies and improving morale.
- ❖ **Use the funds towards replacing/upgrading large kitchen equipment for efficiency. For example, purchasing a combi oven.**
- ❖ **Increase storage capacity by adding refrigerator/freezer units.** * Consider renting initially to assess how these units best meet the needs of your program (i.e., size and location). Once you determine what works well, make the purchase. If needed, walk-in freezers and coolers can be placed outside of the school if space does not permit inside the kitchen.
- ❖ **Install a central cooler/freezer to use when you have an overflow or in case of emergencies, like when a freezer or cooler shuts down.**
- ❖ **Upgrade your temperature monitoring and control systems on coolers/freezers.**
- ❖ **Invest in reusable trays.**
- ❖ **Buy a salad/breakfast bar or refrigerated buffet table.** This equipment is useful for Offer Versus Serve (OVS) and Grab and Go Breakfast.
- ❖ **Purchase equipment to offer alternative and innovative meal delivery models like Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab and Go Breakfast.** Consider equipment like breakfast carts, insulated rolling bags, portable kiosks, and mobile POS systems.
- ❖ **Upgrade computers and printers at each school POS location and the food service office.**

Breakfast Focused Staff Training and Professional Development

- ❖ **Take your team to a conference or association meeting.** Ideally, make this an annual practice so staff can learn about new breakfast products, equipment, and hot topics.

*All costs must be specific to food service and have stipulations to be allowable. Reach out to MDE for guidelines on allowability, requirements, and sufficient supporting documentation.

- ❖ **Hire a company or a professional to offer culinary training.** This can be a great opportunity to refresh knife techniques, cooking skills, and food safety practices.
- ❖ **Provide additional training and professional development for staff as it relates to improving the breakfast food service program and to meet professional standards requirements.**

Breakfast Nutrition Education

- ❖ **Teach students the importance of eating breakfast for establishing healthy eating habits.** This translates to better attendance, better grades, reduce behavior issues, increased focus in the classroom, etc. This supports MDE Strategic Education Plan goal #3.
- ❖ **Launch a “harvest of the month” program.** Promote seasonal, local, and healthy eating by showcasing in-season fruits and vegetables at breakfast.
- ❖ **Start a school garden program.** Serve garden fresh food at breakfast.
- ❖ **Purchase a cooking cart for cooking demonstrations as part of the breakfast meal service.** Consider offering taste testing of new breakfast menu items.
- ❖ **Purchase aquaponic tower gardens so students have experience growing food.** These foods could be used in the breakfast program for garnishes or fresh herbs for flavoring.

Questions

Please contact the Office of Health and Nutrition Services’ Fiscal and Administrative Services Monitoring Team at:

MDE-Fiscal@michigan.gov

517-241-5380

ⁱ [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(o0qoi2ukzuzuvu1r0zhukzgn\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-388-1631a](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(o0qoi2ukzuzuvu1r0zhukzgn))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-388-1631a)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/2022/Fiscal/2022-Memo--State-School-Aid-Act--Sections-31a-31d-and-31f.pdf?rev=b3ba3f2d26414d17b95352cc8f1a2eb3&hash=2830D4ABAA12BE96CA9A2E71DF60B26C>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Pre-Approved_Food_Service_Equipment_List_8-4-21_731854_7.pdf

^{iv} https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Admin_Memo_No._5_715592_7.pdf

*All costs must be specific to food service and have stipulations to be allowable. Reach out to MDE for guidelines on allowability, requirements, and sufficient supporting documentation.