



# MEALS IN THE CLASSROOM



## Standard Operating Procedures

Serving meals in the classroom provides all students with equal access to the meals they need to succeed. It eliminates the stigma that can be associated with free and reduced breakfasts and lunches, provides a social and emotional learning environment key to student development and can help increase a program's Average Daily Participation (ADP).

While Breakfast in the Classroom is more well-known than Lunch in the Classroom, the operating procedures for both programs are basically the same. Both involve transporting meals from the cafeteria to individual classrooms (via delivery by nutrition staff or pickup by students).

Logistics for both programs are simple but planning and training are important to success. To ensure a smooth transition from traditional meal service, Midwest Dairy has prepared this comprehensive list of Standard Operating Procedures.

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## Roles and Responsibilities:

A successful Meals in the Classroom (MIC) program involves multiple stakeholders, all playing different but equally important roles, outlined below.

### School Nutrition Director:

The school nutrition director is typically the key player in starting Breakfast in the Classroom or Lunch in the Classroom. A school nutrition director will present the concept to district administration and principals to ensure critical buy-in. They are also responsible for training the rest of their school nutrition staff, teachers and janitorial staff on new policies/procedures that go along with in-classroom meals. Additional responsibilities include equipment purchasing, food and equipment storage, and completion of grant applications.

### Superintendent:

Superintendents can be powerful partners in school nutrition initiatives, including MIC. When implementing district-wide meal expansion programs, a superintendent should be involved in the early discussions. Their buy-in is valuable when

presenting the concept to individual school principals and critical to ensuring streamlined, district-wide implementation.

### Principals:

A principals' support of Meals in the Classroom is crucial to the longevity and success of the program in their school. They can help obtain buy-in from teachers and janitorial staff and support promotion with students and parents.

### Teachers:

Widespread teacher support of MIC helps ensure each classroom follows the plan for food distribution, eating times and clean up procedures. Teachers should be provided with training on the benefits and the procedures of Meals in the Classroom, particularly that it will not take away from instructional time or create additional waste in their classroom. More training should be provided on

reimbursable meals if they will be responsible for serving any food.

### Custodians:

Custodians play one of the most important roles in any food service model. Obtain initial buy-in from the district's lead custodian and campus' lead custodian to ensure appropriate staff coverage is available. They can also provide valuable input when designing the program procedures, such as trash pickup times and what custodial supplies are needed.

### School Nutrition Supervisors:

School nutrition supervisors can help deliver teacher and staff trainings and create promotion plans for students and parents. During the initial rollout, they can play an important role in monitoring campus-wide/district-wide food prep, delivery, teacher/student reception and clean-up.

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## Roles and Responsibilities (continued):

### Menu Planner:

Cycle menus for MIC should be carefully thought out to capitalize on the model's strengths and decrease potential accidents. For example, menu planners will want to consider foods that are less likely to cause spillage and foods that travel well in a mobile cart or cooler.

### School Nutrition Managers:

School nutrition managers will oversee food prep as well as initial distribution to students or classrooms, depending on the school/district preferences. They will also be responsible for entering all information into Point of Sale (POS) systems.

### Students:

Depending on the campus/district preferences, students may be involved in Meals in the Classroom delivery or pickup. This can help ease strain on cafeteria staff and get students excited about the new service method. Students typically assist in picking up pre-labeled coolers from a designated area, like the cafeteria, and delivering it to their classroom. They can also return the cooler to the cafeteria after the meal.

### Parents:

Parents should be notified of any new food service model and provided with resources to support education and understanding of MIC.

### Attendance/Registrar:

The registrar's office can assist with keeping accurate building and class rosters to ensure the appropriate numbers of meals are planned for, prepped and delivered.

### Additional Resources:

[School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Fact Sheet | USDA-FNS](#)

[School Breakfast | Center for Best Practices \(nokidhungry.org\)](#)

## Implementation and Logistics:

### Rollout Timeline:

#### *3-6 Months Prior to Rollout*

### School Nutrition Staff:

- Solicit buy-in from superintendent, principals, custodians and campuses.
- Visit local districts successfully implementing Meals in the Classroom to observe best practices and ask school nutrition director for training materials.
- Apply for partner or community funding opportunities as needed.
- Develop a task force of school stakeholders to discuss the model change and provide feedback/input.
  - Include the principal, teachers, custodians, school nutrition staff and student representatives
- Meet with principal and custodians to discuss food pickup schedule, trash disposal areas and insulated bag storage areas.

- Determine training resources needed and coordinate MIC training schedule leading up to launch date.
- Determine what additional equipment will be needed and initiate purchase.
- Confirm rollout timeline with principal.
- Develop a plan to market Meals in the Classroom to students/staff/parents. Use direct mail, email and the school/district website along with any social media.
- Determine point of sale / counting and claiming method.
  - Consider having students pre-order entree to reduce food waste
- Determine what, if any, customizations campuses can make to their MIC service in addition to which model type will be implemented:

- Scheduled delivery by school nutrition / cafeteria staff
- Student pickup/return

### District Administration / Principals:

- Agree to MIC implementation, support district/campus transition to new model.
- Accompany school nutrition director on visits to local districts successfully implementing Meals in the Classroom to observe best practices.
- Approve equipment purchases, if necessary.
- Inform office staff of rollout progress, including training schedules, and supply them with all necessary information to field questions from staff, parents and students.

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## Implementation and Logistics (continued):

### **Custodians:**

- Provide buy-in to Meals in the Classroom model.
- Begin to determine new food pickup schedule, trash disposal areas, etc.
- Consider staff/labor schedules and responsibilities.

### **Teachers/Staff:**

- School nutrition may invite a few teachers to observe best practices at local districts successfully implementing MIC. This helps with teacher/staff buy-in.

### **2-3 Months Prior to Rollout**

#### **School Nutrition Staff:**

- Launch marketing and communications campaign to promote Meals in the Classroom.
- Conduct teacher and staff trainings.
- Determine cycle menus, considering items that are classroom friendly.
- Finalize what claiming method will be used.
- Coordinate with custodians to finalize a plan for trash/recycle/compost. Confirm if any additional trash equipment/containers are needed and order any additional equipment.
- Develop a plan for late students to obtain breakfast.
- Order any additional supplies (e.g., trash bags, disinfectant wipes, etc.) that classrooms will need.

#### **District Administration / Principals:**

- Support parent education of Meals in the Classroom. Consider sending a letter providing all essential information about the program, including opt-out information.

- Support staff and teacher trainings.
- Coordinate with school nutrition on rollout process.

### **Teachers/Staff:**

- Attend MIC trainings. Teachers who attended site visits earlier in the year should share their experience during the training.
- If delivery model chosen is student pickup/return, teachers begin to develop student helper schedule.

### **Custodians:**

- Designate areas in school for trash containers and pickup.
- Determine trash pickup times.

### **1-4 Weeks Prior to Rollout**

#### **School Nutrition Staff:**

- Confirm cycle menus and ensure enough food has been ordered to accommodate increases in participation.
- Ensure classrooms have all the necessary supplies for rollout (e.g., trash bags, disinfectant wipes, etc.).

### **Custodians:**

- Ensure additional trash equipment/containers have been procured.

### **Teachers/Staff:**

- Attend Meals in the Classroom trainings. Teachers who attended site visits earlier in the year should share their experience during the training.
- If delivery model chosen is student pickup/return, teachers begin to develop student helper schedule.

### **Throughout Rollout**

#### **School Nutrition Staff:**

- Continue marketing efforts: consider running a contest to promote the new service method.
- Observe each campus during first month of rollout.
- Make immediate adjustments to the program as needed to troubleshoot issues.
- Solicit feedback from campus stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

#### **District Administrators/Principals:**

- Support school nutrition in meeting with school stakeholders to troubleshoot any issues.
- Provide marketing and education support through staff and parent communications about the program.

### **1-6 Months After Rollout (Ongoing)**

#### **School Nutrition Staff:**

- Check ADP numbers for improvements.
- Check all equipment to ensure performance.
- Meet with school principals, supervisors and cafeteria managers to address any concerns or potential improvements.
- Observe food waste and create a plan to address, if needed. Options to discuss include share tables, pre-orders or revised menu planning.

#### **Additional Resources:**

[No Kid Hungry Breakfast in the Classroom Implementation Timeline](#)

[USDA School Breakfast Program Guidelines](#)

[School Breakfast Toolkit](#)

# MEALS IN THE CLASSROOM

## Equipment Guide

The equipment needed to execute Meals in the Classroom varies and will depend on how your campus/district chooses to implement the program. Below is a list of equipment to consider. If your campus/district participates in Fuel Up to Play 60, you may be eligible for discount pricing through approved equipment vendors. Your Midwest Dairy Wellness Manager can provide more information and direct you to those approved vendors.

- Cooler Bags approximately \$50–\$150 per unit
- Cooler Bag Travel Carts approximately \$50 per unit
- Transport Kiosk approximately \$1,500–\$3,000 per unit
- Mobile Shelving approximately \$250–\$300 per unit
- Storage Bins/Crates approximately \$20–\$30 per unit
- Thermal Hot/Cold Packs approximately \$25–\$40 per unit
- Cooler Bag Dividers approximately \$45 per unit

### **Equipment Purchasing Resources:**

[Hubert Breakfast in the Classroom Equipment](#)

[Sterno Breakfast Delivery Equipment](#)

[Norris School Nutrition Transport Systems](#)

[Hubert Breakfast Equipment Solutions](#)

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## Staffing and Labor Costs

It is important to understand how a new meal service model will affect food service staffing needs. A good way to estimate the number of additional staff hours you will need is to estimate the number of meals your staff makes per hour and plan for an increase by at least 50%. Additionally, look at your current schedule and determine if you will need to adjust the start time of your staff to cover food preparation and delivery.

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## Menus

When determining the menus for MIC, here are some items to keep in mind:

- Offer versus serve – check in with your state agency
- Keeping cost at or below your reduced meal reimbursement
- Avoiding items that will require syrup or other sticky sauces
- Discuss the inclusion of cereal with stakeholders
- Potentially form a student committee to get feedback on menu
- Will you serve hot and cold meals?
- Remember that you will need to include

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## Questions?

Contact your Midwest Dairy Wellness Manager [MidwestDairy@MidwestDairy.com](mailto:MidwestDairy@MidwestDairy.com)

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