

# 1 What is the School Breakfast Program?

## 1.1 Delivery model

The mode of delivery was different in each of the participating schools in the Project BreakFAST study. Study participants discussed the delivery model in terms of setting up their programs, equipment, menus, and cart locations. Many schools called their new breakfast offering “Grab and Go”. Many study participants described offering many different foods for kids to eat from the Grab and Go cart including fruit smoothies, scratch-made breakfast sandwiches as well as burritos and cinnamon rolls. Many schools offered breakfast on the Grab and Go cart along with hot breakfast in the cafeteria to not only maintain, but increase student participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP). One study participant described offering breakfast at five different locations throughout the school for the students. Another study participant reported student backlash after they took hot breakfast out of the cafeteria completely and just had a Grab and Go cart. One study participant described the most challenging aspect of Project BreakFAST was figuring out the delivery model for the new breakfast program. Another study participant described how staff would eat with students. One school participant reported that they did not have students pay with cash, but just punched in a number that would come out of a student account.

*“I guess just figuring out what was working, you know. Everybody was game to try something new so that was really exciting. People were excited about it and so there wasn’t resistance to trying something new but I think just trying to figure out what was the best delivery method and what was working, and why weren’t things working when we didn’t see the bigger increases that we were hoping for so I think that was the biggest challenge, trying to figure it out.” – Cambridge Food Service Director*

### 1.1.1 Breakfast options in the cafeteria

Many study participants offered the traditional breakfast in the cafeteria before school started. Study participants discussed how a small group of students utilized the traditional cafeteria breakfast everyday and many schools saw the benefit in keeping it open. One study participant described trying to get rid of the cafeteria breakfast all together, but after student backlash, they opened it back up. A few study participants described also offering a second chance breakfast in their cafeteria as well as on the breakfast cart. Many cafeteria breakfast menus stayed the same with the implementation of the breakfast cart, but some changed either by expanding the food items offered in the cafeteria, or by decreasing the variety and amount of foods offered such as taking away hot items on the line. One study participant described how hot items were offered in the cafeteria while cold items were offered on the breakfast cart.

*“So we didn’t have hot breakfast, we moved breakfast out, and it was just a cold breakfast. And we had a lot of students that liked hot breakfasts were not happy about that. So that was something that we brought back, and we just did it earlier in the morning. – Cambridge Food Service Director*

### 1.1.2 First chance

Many schools offered breakfast in the cafeteria and/or on a Grab and Go breakfast cart before school started. Several study participants described putting a Grab and Go cart out right away in the morning for students in areas that were very convenient for them to access the cart, such as where the students entered the school or congregated. A study participant reported that many students arrived at school early for breakfast and socialized before school started, while other students arrived to school right before it started. Students always had the first chance breakfast option, but the cafeteria was out of the way so it wasn’t really utilized. One study participant described how students did not

understand the breakfast cart right away. Another study participant discussed the shift in students who took breakfast from the cafeteria to the Grab and Go cart. The first chance breakfast offers hot items in some schools, and after the implementation of the breakfast cart, the breakfast changed to cold line items. A few study participants reported that their first chance breakfast has the same number of students participating after they implemented the Grab and Go breakfast, while other study participants saw a drop in student participation in their first chance breakfast.

*“It’s rolled out at breakfast to our bus doors. There are two entrances for the kids at 8:00 AM in the morning, or I guess they open up at 7:30 AM but we bring the breakfast cart down at 7:45 AM to the bus door. And then after first bell, that door is locked so the kids can only come in one door by the main office. So the cart is rolled down there at 7:45 and we serve our outpost breakfast there at 7:45 AM to about 8:20 AM and then it’s rolled back up to main serving area where we restock and then we roll it to the opposite corner of the school for the 9:40 AM break is when their first break is for the second chance breakfast. And then it’s brought back to the lunch area so we can restock it for sandwiches.” – Thief River Falls Food Service Director*

### **1.1.3 Second Chance**

Schools implemented the second chance breakfast to reach more of their students. Research suggests that high school students are not hungry early in the morning, but may become hungry later in the morning. This is where second chance fits in. Many schools offered second chance breakfast between 9:00 AM and 10:00 AM, in between classes. Many study participants described offering second chance right before homeroom or TA hour so students had time to eat their breakfasts without disrupting their classes. Setting up the second chance breakfast was all about figuring out logistics such as cart location, staff time, menu items, students going to get breakfast, locations where students can eat, number of carts, computers, POS systems, and serving line management. Many study participants described a huge increase in SBP participation with the implementation of second chance breakfast. One study participant reported an increase of student participation from 25 students (before second chance was offered) to 200 students participating in the SBP. One study participant reported the second chance breakfast helped the most in increasing student participation. Another study participant described their second chance breakfast as not popular the first year, but the students became used to the cart in the hall and saw an increase in student participation the second year. Many schools offered cold Grab and Go items such as cheese sticks, milk, fruit cups and packaged grain products on breakfast carts for second chance. One study participant mentioned that the second chance breakfast has not impacted lunch counts at all. Another school, which has not reported a very successful breakfast program, described their school as not being able to provide a second chance breakfast.

*“And as we implemented Grab and Go this year – it’s at their TA time, their teacher assisted I think it’s what it’s called time so it’s midmorning. They’re going from 25, which is traditional, to almost 200 plus breakfasts a day, which has been a very good response from students.” –Montevideo Food Service Director*

## **1.2 School Breakfast Program modifications**

### **1.2.1 Breakfast Cart Line Items**

Many school breakfast programs added a variety of items to the second chance Grab and Go cart. Most of the study participants described adding cold pre-packaged items to the cart so it was easy for the kids to grab, go and eat their breakfast. A unique barrier to the prepackaged items was that many items did not meet the nutritional requirements of the Smart Snack regulation. Foods such as fruit cups and prepackaged grain products were popular at schools. Some study participants reported offering hot menu items such as breakfast sandwiches and burritos made from scratch. Many study participants worried about the breakfast cart line items becoming stagnant and decreasing student

participation, so these schools tried to keep fresh menu items. Some study participants offered the same four or five different items everyday for students to take. One study participant offered students four stagnant items and one rotating item. This study participant also offers smoothies, which has been very popular with students. One study participant described displaying the breakfast cart with cloths, bowls and baskets to make breakfast look good for the students. Many programs experimented with foods to understand if the students enjoyed them or not.

*“The menu, we’ve added a whole bunch more offerings for the kids that meet the National Breakfast Program. And that we’ve been experimenting with, some of them are good, and some are really poor. The kids don’t like. There’s been banana and zucchini bread that has been really well received. A couple of the other ones that I’m trying to think of that they really couldn’t stand-Oh, a breakfast bun I think was from super bakery, and they didn’t like those at all. So we still are stuck with quite a few of those.” – Thief River Falls Food Service Director*

### **1.2.2 Convenience**

The more convenient schools can make their Grab and Go breakfast carts the more success they seemed to have in the program. Many study participants described making the location of the Grab and Go breakfast cart convenient and easy to access for students. Study participants reported that students also saw the cart consistently in it’s location and were more inclined to take the breakfast. Some study participants described the cafeteria breakfast as out of the way and not convenient for the students. Study participants also described the time, where students could eat, and staggering students’ participation in the breakfast cart as creating convenience for the students. Some schools also either pre-bagged everything or offered bags for students to put their breakfast in as well as prepackaged foods to make the second chance breakfast fast and efficient for everyone.

*“We wanted to just make it easy and convenient. In our school, the cafeteria is, I guess I’ll just describe it, as it’s in the basement and so not maybe as convenient and quick. So that’s hoping it was going to be a little more accessible for those that are really coming in last minute.” – Owatonna Food Service Director*

### **1.2.3 Equipment**

Many schools purchased equipment for their second chance breakfast program. One study participant described purchasing a smoothie maker. Many study participants discussed purchasing bowls to present breakfast items in as well as laptops to use for purchases. Schools had to purchase or use an existing cart, cam chillers for cold beverages, computer risers and keypads. With successful breakfast programs, some schools had to purchase more equipment to handle the capacity and the logistics of the program.

*“It got to the point where we started out with a single serving line and we had to purchase another table with district funds and add more personnel. And when we did that, added a second serving line, we had even more students that started participating because they didn’t have to wait in line so long.” – Montevideo High School Principal*

### **1.2.4 Location**

Location of the Grab and Go, or second chance breakfast, was a key in the success of Project Breakfast. Many study participants described setting the breakfast cart out where students could easily see and access it during passing times. Many schools had to figure out the best location for their cart and moved it around a few times before they found the right spot for it. Many study participants reported having more than one breakfast cart and/or more than one location where the grab and go breakfast was offered. Many study participants discussed the consistency of the placement of the cart and how this could also increase participation.

*“...After first block, which is 9:20 or thereabouts to 9:40, we started by adding one cart to the commons, which is the main passing hallway on the main floor of the senior high. Interestingly enough, the lines were so long that we have opted to also add a cart to our second floor at the high school. So there’s one now on the first floor- and I’ll go into this in a little bit-but our assistant principal actually took the cart, made sure it fit into the elevator with one of my staff one day, and said, “you know what? It fits. Let’s move one to the second floor.” So since we started this fall, actually added a full second cart to the second floor for the high school as well, where primarily the students are passing on that second floor of the building.” – Willmar Food Service Director*

### **1.2.5 Locations to eat breakfast**

Most schools allowed students to eat in the halls and the classrooms. Many study participants described changing school policy to allow students to eat in the halls or the classrooms. Teachers also had to be flexible, in some cases, to allow students to eat in their classrooms. Some study participants described having designated classrooms where students were allowed to eat and designated classrooms where students were not allowed to eat.

*“At first, we were amazed that we had a lot of students. It built after the next couple months, so we were getting some students late to class so you know it’s hard to talk to teachers to allow things in their classroom, because we typically have a no eating policy, but we’ve adjusted that, and for the most part, most teachers and students have been very respectful.” – New London Spicer Principal*

### **1.2.6 New Purchases**

Schools participating in Project BreakFAST were given money to plan and implement their programs. Many schools purchased equipment for their Grab and Go breakfast programs such as laptops, baskets, Point-of-Sale keypads, cambrols, vending kiosks and rolling carts. Some study participants also described using money to invest in another cart and location in their schools. One study participant reported the welding class creating stands for the Grab and Go breakfasts.

*“We have had to order a second kiosk so that kids could get through the line faster. You know, being able to buy that, I think that the fact that we’re able to get another kiosk, and I’m assuming that some of that came from some of the dollars that we were able to gather through going through this study, has definitely benefited.” – Hutchinson Principal*

## **2 Factors that motivate involvement**

### **2.1 Importance of breakfast**

When asked why they thought it was important to modify their school breakfast program the primary response of food service directors was making breakfast more convenient and the importance of feeding students a healthy meal in the morning to keep them “well fed” and not hungry. Other motivating factors for modifying the school breakfast included their wish to increase participation, in turn increasing revenue and hoping to increase the image their meal program.

The primary response of principals was their hope that student achievement would increase if the students ate breakfast. Many reported that research showed that students that ate breakfast were more attentive, had more energy, less distracted and generally ready to learn. Other responses indicated that they wished to see fewer discipline issues and fewer visits to the nurse’s office, in the morning students frequently report headaches and ask to go home.

*The hope is that the students are not sitting in class hungry. We hope they have a little bit more energy, they have a little bit more awareness and that they’re engaged in those classroom lessons. We know that if we improve engagement, if*

*the kids are actively engaged in that process, then their student achievement is going to go up. That's the ultimate goal of basically anything we do in our school. – Apollo Senior High Principal*

## **2.2 Increase Participation**

Food service directors indicated that school breakfast participation was very low at the high school level and the program was underutilized. One food service director felt that participation was down overall due to the calorie and product size restrictions, she was looking for a way to bring students back to the program.

*Participation for breakfast, like I said, was so minimal before, it was like if we can even double that, get to 50, I was going to be pleased with it.*

*But participation, number one, giving students that ability to have breakfast. To help them academically was another one, and then ultimately to help the food service department at Montevideo doesn't have a very large fund balance and if we could increase participation at breakfast, hopefully it would also increase revenue for the department in a very positive way, giving students breakfast and actually having the department benefit so that we could—they are in need of equipment in their buildings and food service equipment and ultimately hopefully we'll be able to have the room to purchase a few things that they absolutely need as a result of revenue from the program too.- Montevideo Senior High School Food Service Director.*

## **2.3 Middle and Elementary School SBP**

Elementary and middle school breakfast programs have more success with school breakfast, having a quick and accessible breakfast option for high school students will help continue participation by the younger students as they enter high school.

*We have great participation in our elementary schools and we have great participation in our lunch programs at both the middle school and the senior high level but the breakfast program was nil, it was approximately 15% before we started this program and just felt that we needed to do something to try to promote breakfast as being basically being the most important meal of the day for the students. – Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

## **2.4 Populations at school**

Some of the principals and food service directors interviewed felt that the modified school breakfast program provided be one more way to reach students that do not have access to regular meals at their home. One food service director indicated that finding foods for their ethnically diverse student body has presented a challenge.

*With our increasing population of students that are living in poverty, more and more of our students now qualify for free and reduced lunch, I think any time we have an opportunity for students to be fed and it's only going to increase their ability to become more engaged in classrooms, and obviously, the ultimate goal is to improve student achievement at that point. – Apollo Senior High School Principal*

*Well, more than anything, we just know that we do have a population of students who do not necessarily have regular access at home to meals, and so we're just hoping to increase that access for our students. – Owatonna Principal*

## 3 Process of implementation

### 3.1 Important factors

#### 3.1.1 Challenges

There were many challenges cited by principals and food service directors. One prevalent challenge mentioned was having a weak internet connection, they started on with a wireless connection. If the connection was slow or lost it created long lines of students, slowed everything down and increased the potential for errors in recording purchases. To overcome this challenge, some schools hardwired the point of sale equipment at the location of the carts; others moved their carts to areas that had stronger wireless connections. Purchasing the correct point of sale equipment was also mentioned and the importance of working with the tech department to select the best equipment.

Other challenges mentioned were lack of buy-in and/or reluctance related to the project by staff (teachers, custodians and sometimes administration), finding the best location for the carts and maintaining a menu rotation that included new foods to keep students interested. Solutions to these challenges included educating staff well in advance of the program (and its objectives), asking for their input while planning the project, student feedback regarding the foods served and persistence as you try to find the best location for the cart.

*“Just remembering who all to involve in the process I guess would be the challenge is you know when you’re talking health inspectors and staff, you know, like the technology staff and the food service staff and you know the building administration and getting student feedback on products, I think the challenge is figuring out how to deal with those aspects and put together a program that ultimately is something the students want and are going to utilize. And so it really came down to making sure you communicated to all the individuals that needed to be part of that planning process so that we could implement and have implementation go smoothly.”*

*Montevideo High School Food Service Director*

*“I would say the biggest problem, it was to believe that this is going to work, you know? That the students are going to buy this stuff, that it’s going to require having 2 carts in between blocks 1 and 2, that no staff is going to complain about the kids eating in class or having some juice in class or maybe being a couple seconds late to class. You know, red flags are thrown up all the way before this comes out, and the only way to see the big picture is to walk through it. You have to experience it and the experience that the staff has had, the committee, the kids, and again, it’s been very, very positive. So I think just the change, like anything, you know you get used to this change.”*

*Willmar High School Principal*

#### 3.1.2 Champions

Champions of Project BreakFAST included food service staff, principals, students and even the “Radio Guy” a broadcaster from a local radio station who reads the breakfast menus every morning at 6:50.

When principals were asked to identify champions of Project BreakFAST they most often noted food service staff, everyone from the food service director, kitchen manager to the people that serve the students from the breakfast

carts. The champion like qualities includes hard work, positive attitude, great rapport with students and their leadership. Mentioned often, and most notable is that the staff is “doing it for the students”.

Qualities that identified principals as champions were their leadership of the project, the ability to set the tone with staff, their flexibility as the program was rolled out and their ability to involve key staff members.

The student champions were identified because of their commitment to the planning and implementation process. They attended meetings regularly, shared their insight on what would work and not work, they introduced the program during the start of school assembly, visited classrooms to talk about the program, planned the marketing strategy and participated in the making the materials such as the breakfast marketing videos and posters.

Qualities mentioned when identifying teachers as champions of Project BreakFAST include; explaining and promoting the new breakfast program, flexibility with students arriving a bit late and also with students eating in their classroom, modeling good breakfast habits by participating in program and eating with students, and their involvement in assisting students create the marketing campaigns.

*“The high school principal, I can’t speak highly enough of Brian, he’s just phenomenal and somebody that is just so appreciative of in every part, but especially with this project breakfast. He would walk around the building with us, trying to see the best locations and we would meet with him. He just was—and we would have, see if he could meet for a few minutes with the food service staff just because we wanted to make sure we were on top of things, he just always took the time to make sure we were all on the same page and ready to roll and everything.”*

*Bemidji High School FSD*

*“It wasn’t a hard sell for the kitchen staff because they saw the value of having kids eat breakfast”*

*New London Spicer FSD*

*“Our food service people, because they have a great attitude and the culture they have created in their area”*

*TRF Principal*

### **3.1.3 Elements of success**

#### **3.1.4 Helpful in making changes**

Principals and food service directors provided many, many examples of what they felt contributed to the success of their new expanded breakfast programs. The first wave schools felt the binder materials, professionals available for consult and the grant funds were all helpful. Some noted that the enthusiasm of the research team (U of MN Project BreakFAST research team and the U of MN Extension liaison) was contagious and created excitement for the project. They also appreciated that the research team prompted them to stay on task and was available for assistance as needed. Some schools felt that the initial student survey data helped shape their program. Most notable is the fact that kids reported not being hungry right away in the morning which prompted the implantation of second chance breakfast – served after first period, the time that kids reported feeling hungry. Implementing second chance breakfast was the turning point for many schools.

For the schools that were slated as “late start” schools (control group), they felt the ability to learn from schools that implemented the program first was extremely helpful, they were able to learn from the proven successes, the mistakes made and best of all how to improve the program to ensure success at their own schools. This valuable data was gathered, deciphered and delivered to schools through the research team.

*“I think it was guidance from the research team (~~your guys’ end~~) on how to do it, coming to the school and supporting that, asking questions, connecting with us, helping with the marketing. The fact that we were able to get another kiosk using the dollars through this study has definitely benefited the program and I think it was the teamwork that happened with the research team leading it.”* -- Hutchinson Principal

The breakfast cart and the menu were two areas that need special attention for success. Schools reported that finding the best location for the cart, by trial, error and persistence was very important. The cart needs to be convenient for the greatest number of students or the use of multiple carts to reach the most students. Carts should be visually appealing and functional. For example, using a stainless steel table on wheels, covering it with a table cloth so it looks nice and hides the lower shelf (the lower shelf holds extra food items for restocking) along with selecting the proper containers to keep food cold and also allow for easy selection by the student. Tips for successful menus included having a good variety so students have choices, find new items and let students know ahead of time you will be adding something new (providing a taste test ahead of time works well), try to find new items that students will be excited about such as smoothies. Some schools cautioned against changing the menu too often, students appreciated some consistency. Staffing the cart with staff that have a positive attitude and ability to relate to students was also provide as an element of success. Food service staff also suggested the importance of listening to students as they pass though each morning and using their feedback to improve the program.

*“Best practices, again, listen, feedback, communication from the students is essential for the success because unless you’re providing them with the variety of the foods that they will actually ingest, it won’t serve a purpose.”*  
--Bemidji FSD

Administrative support and involvement was cited as a key to success, along with a planning committee made up of administration, students, teachers, food service staff, wellness committee members, school social worker and the school nurse. Careful selection of students was advised, finding students that are committed and well accepted among the student body.

*“Involve the right people, whether it is school staff, food service staff, whether it is students, just have a broad base of members on the committee because of course if there is input across the board you have a stronger program to implement.”* -----Willmar Food Service Director

*“One of the best things was working with the kids, because I really think that peer-to-peer marketing was very helpful.”*  
---- Isanti/Cambridge FSD

One other element of success mentioned was the professional marketing services provided through the grant, many felt the video and marketing materials were very beneficial. The student and teaching staff involvement in this piece was seen as a positive impact on the program.

### 3.1.5 Positive changes

One positive change is that since the initial planning stages the naysayers or those that felt the program would not work are now advocates for the program and have been surprised at the success. Whether they worried that trash would be all over the school, food ground into the carpet, too many kids late to class or worried about staffing within food service, all of these concerns fell by the wayside and were proven to be non-issues in Project BreakFAST.

*“I just have to say that those principals that were naysayers at the beginning, as I mentioned, the assistant principal was the one who took the breakfast cart, put it in the elevator, made sure that it fit so that we could add a second program. He was on board once he saw that there wasn’t a big mess that the students really liked having another opportunity to have breakfast and now I think he’s probably the biggest advocate ~~(poster-child)~~ for the program!” – Willmar FSD*

### 3.1.6 Inclusive approach – move this data to SBET under 1.3 Planning For the Program

#### 3.1.7 Progress 5 months in Wave 2

Schools that implemented Project BreakFAST in September have reported that five months into the project interest is still high among the students and some schools surpassed their goals within the first five months. Skeptics of the program have been pleasantly surprised by the number of students that are eating the grab and go or second chance breakfast. Also noted was the high level of student involvement in the planning process to get the program off the ground, the project provided many opportunities for student involvement.

*“It’s been fantastic. We had a goal of trying to hit approximately 500 and I believe we were definitely beyond that. We’ve had a couple of 600 days prior to Christmas. I don’t believe we’ve been back up in that area yet, but yet in the mid to high 500s. Again, the participation has been fantastic from the students and everything, and it doesn’t seem to be something that is wavering or going away. They still are interested in it. We try to provide them with items that they enjoy.” – Bemidji High School FSD*

### 3.1.8 Successful strategies for participation (included in 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.5)

#### 3.1.9 Relationships

Support and leadership from the principal seemed to be one of the keys to success. One food service director reported that the rapport between food service and the principal has been remarkable; the principal supports decisions made by food service. Knowing what is going on with the food service end of the program, listening and providing feedback were also listed as positive qualities of a principal.

*“The rapport between the principal and our food service staff is also remarkable. They (administration) really help complement what we do, I think that the relationship is key for the success of what we try to do in the food service. We always have the administration backing what we are trying to do. – Bemidji Food Service Director*

## 3.2 Marketing and media

### 3.2.1 Communications

Communication was a huge facilitator in creating, implementing, and increasing School Breakfast Program participation in high schools. Communication had to occur between administration, foodservice staff, teachers, facilities, parents, and students about the School Breakfast Program changes. The participants in this study described communicating to parents through newsletters sent home, at parent nights and open houses. A few schools also ran articles on the School

Breakfast Program changes in the local newspaper. Participants in the study described administration facilitating meetings with teachers, board members, facilities, and foodservice staff to discuss the School Breakfast Program changes.

Schools in the study had to communicate to their largest stakeholders, the students. Schools would make announcements over loud speakers and on paper to students. Campaigns were run to promote the School Breakfast Program through hanging posters and other signs around the school hallways, using social media such as Twitter, handing out promotional t-shirts, sampling new school breakfast items, and creating promotional videos. A few of the study participants stated that the greatest promotion happened between teachers talking to students about the new School Breakfast Program as well as peers talking to other peers about breakfast.

*“I think again like I said, it was word of mouth, students that were coming into their classroom with their grab and go bag and other students saying hey where did you get that? And so then it kind of took off from there. And I guess I would include some of the teachers with that as well and explaining what the process was. We had through a little, every year we do this, but at the beginning of the year we had our teachers explain what the grab and go breakfast was to all of our 1400 students here. So they were made aware of it.” –Apollo Senior High Principle*

### **3.2.2 Education around changes**

Education around the new grab and go breakfast was an important component to the success of the School Breakfast Program changes in schools. The administration and/or foodservice director had to educate teachers early in the year to discuss the process of the changes to the new School Breakfast Program. A few schools did this in their teacher workshops before the school year began. Study participants described educating students about the changes to the school breakfast program and helping them understand the second chance Grab and Go program through marketing and teacher communication. Study participants described the importance of educating parents and the community about breakfast. One study participant had school staff members provide an educational talk about the School Breakfast Program changes in the local high school on the radio. Study participants described the importance of educating parents and the community about why breakfast is important, the new School Breakfast Program changes at their school and parents taking the lead in promoting the importance of eating breakfast to their teenager. One school even translated newsletters to parents regarding the Grab and Go breakfast in Spanish and Somali.

*“The other thing that we did in the planning of it because as I mentioned already we were really wanting to target those students who are eligible for free breakfast already, our free and reduced students so we used some of the U of M materials and had them translated into Spanish and Somali and sent a letter home about the middle of September to say, Hey, we’ve got this new program at the high school, if you qualify for free and reduced meals the meals are provided, here’s the times that we’re offering it. Please encourage your students to participate. I think that helped our participation as well because, like I said, having almost half the students free and reduced it just helped with our participation.” – Willmar Food Service Director*

### **3.2.3 Marketing**

Marketing the new Grab and Go breakfast programs at high schools was instrumental in the success of this project, although a few study participants described not using marketing for their breakfast program changes. Some of these schools wish they would have done more educational marketing and are already planning to do so for future School Breakfast Program changes in other schools within their district.

Many study participants held huge promotions for the new School Breakfast Program Grab and Go. Schools launched huge marketing campaigns with creative themes such as the Super Hero Lunch Ladies, Hunger Games, Anchorman, and “Are you ready for this?” Schools really used multiple components to market the new grab and go breakfast option including videos, flyers and newsletters to parents and students, samples and free breakfast, signs, posters, banners, announcements, free promotional t-shirts, presentations, material on their school website, social media (Twitter), table tents, newspaper articles and radio announcements. Many schools worked with students to promote and market the new School Breakfast Program. One study participant described peer-to-peer marketing being the best type of marketing.

Many schools really were inclusive with their marketing campaigns and collaborated with students, teachers, bus drivers and even maintenance staff to promote the Grab and Go breakfast. Although many schools reported having fun creating the promotional video a few schools thought it was too much work and would not do it again. A few study participants described creating marketing materials through different classes such as the business and marketing along with art classes. Many of the study participants enjoyed working with Community Blue Print to create various marketing materials. One of the study schools even used the homecoming parade as a place to market with a SBP float as well as students handing out mini boxes of cereal. Another school described having picture booths where students could have their pictures taken with the school mascot as well as with milk mustaches. This school also had breakfast punch cards where students received a punch in their card each time they purchased breakfast in the morning. The students were then entered to win prizes. Many schools reported translating newsletters for parents to read and hoping parents would help promote the school breakfast to their son/daughter.

*“The students again just ran with that. The main thing they wanted to do was include everybody because with that theme, “Are you ready for this?” they wanted to be very inclusive of staff, as well as students and so that everyone that had any role that they were playing at the high school would be involved in that. Food service staff, maintenance, teaching staff, parents, students, yeah and they were the ones that, they met with every group that was represented and again it was the students that did this and that core—“*

*“Well, we certainly, the first week this was introduced the second week of school as far as the second chance breakfast and so that’s when it took off and that first, after the showing of the film that morning, and the students again were the ones that did the basically the introduction to this to the rest of our student body and our food service staff was up on stage and everything and we had T-shirts printed specifically for second chance breakfast and you know Project Breakfast and Are you ready for this? Was on the back of their T-shirts and everything so the overall theme was promoted that day and we also had packaged and provided a free breakfast for every student and we felt this way students would have the, would really know what was in that breakfast and not just you know what’s in it today? Type thing and stuff so that way we—and overall, I mean, the cost was, it worked into our program beautifully. Because of that we certainly saw participation increase initially and when it was over 300 even the first, by the end of September, we were thrilled with the fact, and it just continued to grow throughout the fall so and yet computers were a challenge.” – Bemidji High Food Service Director*

### **3.2.4 Sampling**

Sampling the new breakfast cart line items was important for schools to receive input or feedback from students on what they liked and disliked. Students provided feedback of samples verbally, through surveys, and social media. Many study participants described offering early taste testing the spring before the Grab and Go program was implemented, to help foodservice shape breakfast menu items as well as give a sneak peak of the program to students. Schools

described the reasons for doing taste testings with students as a way to get students to at least try the breakfast, to utilize the taste testings as marketing tools for students and parents at open houses, and to increase the hype around the SBP.

*“And it was very concerning for me when they’re saying they don’t like school breakfast, but then these were students who didn’t eat school breakfast so it was like, you know, it’s like everything else, food is subjective, so everybody has an opinion on it, but to me, that just created a bigger challenge for us to figure out, okay, as we set up this breakfast program, what will students like? And how do we entice those students who maybe were non-breakfast eaters at school, to try the program. And so I think it challenged us to do the taste testing of different items and get student buy-in on certain food items prior to us starting.” - New London Spicer Foodservice Director*

### **3.2.5 Social Media**

Some study participants described using social media such as Twitter as a tool to communicate with students regarding the School Breakfast Program, breakfast menu item changes and to post promotional videos.

*“We also have used a Twitter feed that the high school assistant principal has basically monitored when there is a new product that we want to try or just to get the word out to the students and everything that this is what’s happening with the breakfast, check it out. It’s not huge but at least it’s another social media where we do have the ability to communicate with some of the students that utilize it and everything.” –Bemidji High School Foodservice Director*

### **3.2.6 Theme of program**

Study participants described various themes of their programs. The themes ran from Project Breakfast and Smart Start Breakfast to creative themes including the Hunger Games, “Are you ready for this?” as well as Anchorman.

*“Our theme was a take-off of anchorman. We had a couple of kids that were anchors and the weather man was Sunny Side Up, the two anchors were Pam Cakes and B. Bacon and Sid Cereal was a roving reporter. Toast was a roving reporter. – Thief River Falls Foodservice Director”*

## **3.3 Planning for the program**

### **3.3.1 Planning process**

### **3.3.2 SBET**

### **3.3.3 Timeline of implementation**

When interest in signing onto the Project BreakFAST study started with the food service director the first task was to get site administration on board with the project. Meeting with administration early, being prepared for questions and addressing their concerns up front was an important step.

Once administration and the food service director were on the same page, committees were formed to start the planning process. First wave schools reported very informal planning committees whereas the second wave schools had solid planning committees in place well in advance of the project start date. The research team referred to the planning committees as SBETs (School Breakfast Expansion Teams). Rarely did schools adopt this name; they most often referred to their committee as just that – a committee.

Committees were made up of various people, most included the food service director, head cook, kitchen staff, principal or assistant principal and students. Some committees also included teachers (art, industrial tech, Family Consumer Science, health), custodial staff, school nurse, school social worker, Extension liaison, Community Blueprint and even one superintendent.

Committee work consisted of setting goals and creating a plan for communicating the changes in the breakfast program to staff, students and parents. Other agenda items included identifying where the cart would be located, finding the best equipment to use on the cart, finding a point of sale machine and making sure it worked with the internet connection, deciding what time grab and go would be served, how it would be served (bags, paper boats), menu ideas, and coordinating taste testing of products. In one school this work was divided into three sub committees that would come together to report. In schools without committees or weak committees, much of this work was done by the food service director or kitchen manager. As stated earlier, one of the keys to success is the rapport between administration and food service, when both are invested in program the results seemed more favorable.

Some committees met as infrequently as just a few times while other committees met on a regular basis starting late winter or spring and continuing through the start of the program, meetings shifted from planning meetings to a time to assess and reassess and make adjustments according to the progress being made. The importance of forming a strong committee was one of the lessons learned from the wave 1 schools.

*“When I first got word of it from the food service director (~~Connie Jopp~~) agreed to be participating in it, we met first with one of the program directors at the U of M, and got the initial information, also at the meeting was our head cook. The first meeting was to (~~kind of~~) map out what we wanted to do. We put together a committee which included the same members along with our health teacher as well as a couple of students to help us plan for Grab and Go breakfast. That was all done last school year and so that we were ready to roll out the Grab and Go breakfast this fall. Since that time we’ve met a couple times to review how things have been progressing. We’ve taken a look at some of the data, as far as the number of meals—breakfasts—that have been served to relook at what we can do to improve it and we made some adjustments to our staffing to have that little bit more management of the serving lines”*

*- --- Apollo Senior High Principal*

*“Well, we had a planning committee that met late winter, with the program to start the following fall. We had students on there, myself (principal), school nurse, social worker, representative from food service, Bonnie Christianson—who is our U of MN liaison. We just had planning meetings, we took a look at what other schools that had implemented the year before, what are some of the things they had done, what had worked well, and so we decided to offer Second Chance breakfast, we thought would go over well with our students. A survey of our students (done by the research team) showed that students avoided breakfast in the morning because 1) they didn’t want to take the time, that meant getting up earlier 2) they weren’t hungry at 7:30, 8:00 in the morning before school started. So we took that information and said well, let’s serve a second chance breakfast at 10:00, that’s right at the beginning of our homeroom time, make it a quick grab N go, eat in homeroom, and yeah from there we enlisted our business marketing class. They put up posters and developed a little small marketing campaign sent it out to parents and we rolled it out I think the second or third day of school. I will say too that one of the community members that was on our team did a taste testing, a couple of sessions with the students where they brought some of the possible entrées that could be served, had students sample them, and found out what students liked the best and what they did not like. That was an important part of our implementation.”* -----Montevideo High School Principal

### 3.4 Policy changes to support changes

Prior to the changes in the breakfast program, the majority of schools had policies in place stating food was not allowed in the classroom, although, within those policies some schools were more flexible and left it up to individual teachers on whether or not they allowed food in their classrooms. When the new breakfast program was implemented, some administrators informed staff that food would be allowed in their classrooms. In other cases administration left it to the discretion of teachers. Teachers that did not allow food in their classroom became more open and flexible as the school year progressed. Teachers reported that students are very respectful and kept their areas clean.

One school that has been struggling with the new breakfast program reported that the policies related to where food could be brought in the school did not change with the implementation of the grab and go program. There was no support from administration on this matter and the food service director attributes this as the biggest barrier to a successful program.

Passing times did not change with the implementation of grab and go or second chance breakfast. Teachers have been flexible if students are 30 seconds to a minute late. Passing times did not change due to already tight schedules. In some cases time had been built into the schedule for homeroom or announcements, it was a natural fit to eat in the classroom at those times, one school reported changing the tardy policy for the specific periods where students were late due to long lines at the breakfast cart.

*“It was a policy that there was not food anywhere else but in the commons. Providing kiosks in various locations around the school, whether it was first breakfast or second breakfast was going to be a major change for staff, and again, it was the students that did the presentation. I was there, along with our head cook, we did not have one question. They asked the students many questions, and yet there wasn’t a derogatory or a negative comment from the staff at that meeting. From what I heard afterward, they certainly did have a few concerns that they expressed to the principal, and yet nothing has become a major concern during the school year.”* Bemidji High School Food Service Director

### 3.5 Staff roles in schools

#### 3.5.1 Foodservice Staff

The foodservice staff was critical in the preparation and implementation of the new Grab and Go breakfast programs throughout the Project Breakfast Study. Food service staff was seen as champions at some schools. Staff helped promote the school breakfast to students, took photos of the food and assisted with data collection for the research team. Many study participants stated the foodservice staff felt they were there for the students, loved to interact with the students and enjoyed the work they do which made the school breakfast transition easy for the staff to take on. Another study participant reported that the new Grab and Go breakfast assisted with creating a positive relationship between the students and foodservice staff where the school even saw an increase in lunch participation. Many study participants noted the enthusiasm, positive and can-do attitude the foodservice staff had for the new Grab and Go breakfast. The positive attitudes helped the foodservice staff and school with the SBP transition. After implementing the program, many of the study participants described their staff as feeling proud about their jobs and helping to increase the SBP participation. High student participation helps the foodservice staff see the benefit of the program.

Another study participant found it very difficult to work with her foodservice staff and to get them onboard. The foodservice staff did not like change and it was hard to change the staff’s duties and work within everyone’s regular

amount of hours. A participant described setting up the Grab and Go cart as a lot of extra hard work and the foodservice staff were not as excited about the changes the second year as they were in the first.

Many foodservice staffs were involved in various facets of planning and implementing the Grab and Go breakfast carts. Some study participants described involving their foodservice staff members right away by taking them to the UMN workshop, early planning meetings, committees and logistics of the program. Many study participants felt it was important to involve foodservice staff throughout the whole process of planning and implementation.

Since adding the breakfast grab and go cart to their morning programs, many foodservice directors had to figure out how to logistically do this with their staff. Some study participants hired new staff members right away, while other participants rearranged work duties and hours of their existing staff. A study participant described utilizing her staff better and making them more productive. Some participants that had to increase staff hours or hire another staff member, reported that the increased SBP participation paid for the increase in staff time.

Foodservice staff were involved in many of the planning and implementing activities of the new Grab and Go breakfast program. Foodservice staff took part in planning for the new SBP changes and were involved in committees to support changes. Foodservice staff prepared for the new school year with the Grab and Go breakfast. They had to learn the new process of the Grab and Go breakfast. The staff helped with sampling new products and receiving student feedback regarding menu changes. Foodservice staff were in charge of preparing the Grab and Go breakfast items including packaging breakfasts up, setting up the cart in the designated hall of the school, serving students, stocking food items on the cart, point of sale, and breaking the Grab and Go breakfast cart down each day.

*“They know that their purpose in their jobs is for the kids, and anything that they can do to help promote health and nutrition and just a positive program for the kids, they jump at every chance, and this program would not be feasible if it wasn’t for their attitude and their ability and their can-do attitude.” – Bemidji High School Foodservice Director*

### **3.5.1.1 Janitorial or Maintenance Staff**

In the beginning of the school year, the potential mess the Grab and Go breakfasts could make around the school was a major concern for many of the study participants. Many study participants reported that they, fortunately and surprisingly did not have to worry about the students leaving their Grab and Go breakfast trash lying around the school. After setting clear expectations for the students regarding the waste from the Grab and Go breakfasts, the students were responsible and picked up after themselves. Some study participants described having waste issues at the beginning of the school year, but after educating the students about how and where to dispose certain items such as liquids or changing the way they packaged the Grab and Go breakfasts, they diffused their waste woes.

Study participants described including their janitorial staff on the Project Breakfast planning committees to keep them informed of the changes as well as to have their input. One study participant made students in the advisory classes responsible for taking the recycling out once a week.

One study participant described how the janitorial staff was actually a barrier to implementing a successful Grab and Go breakfast cart. The janitorial staff would not let her place the cart anywhere, but right outside the cafeteria because that was written as a school policy. This restricted the success of the program at this school.

*“I think again the maintenance people were surprised there wasn’t any issues and they’ve you know accepted it as part of just the whole program. And again, the staff I think were somewhat surprised that there wasn’t a mess in their classrooms, that there wasn’t, you know, stinky old milk sitting out anyplace (laughs). They certainly used the bags as just part of their garbage and everything. And so things are put in that bag and thrown away.*

*I haven’t heard one issue with any mess in the classroom.” – Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

### **3.5.2 Role of Foodservice Director**

The role of the foodservice director was integral in the implementation of the Grab and Go breakfasts at the high schools. Study participants described the foodservice directors as seeing the Project BreakFAST opportunity, initiating participation in the Project BreakFAST Grant, as well as leaders and drivers in the planning and implementation of the new Grab and Go program. Some study participants described the foodservice directors as enthusiastic and the cheerleader of the program. The foodservice director, in many cases, had to get everyone on board from the principal and other administration, teachers, custodial staff, foodservice staff and students. They were a part of committees as well as formed committees between principals, students, custodial staff, foodservice staff and teachers to create successful breakfast programs. Foodservice directors had to work with multiple people inside and outside of the school. Many of the foodservice directors described working with their foodservice staff, health inspectors and other local public health officials to create plans, design the layout of the cart, as well as purchase and set-up equipment for their Grab and Go breakfast carts in their schools the summer before implementing the program. Many study participants reported that the foodservice director acted as the liaison between the University of Minnesota extension, research team and principal and many times, the foodservice director was responsible for keeping the principle up-to-date on the changes with the SBP, research and data collection.

Only a very few study participants described the foodservice director as being busy with multiple schools. These foodservice directors were in charge of multiple schools so they set up a different point person in their study schools to take the lead. This was still successful and because of the great foodservice staff the foodservice director was willing to try new things on the cart. Another study participant reported a different foodservice director signed onto the study, but then left her position. The new foodservice director was not as enthusiastic about the Project Breakfast study and this may have slowed momentum of the program. The foodservice directors really had to make sure everyone was happy from the janitorial staff, teachers, administration and students. One study participant described choosing breakfast cart line items that created minimal mess such as not serving drinks with red dye and considering food items that did not make crumbs as well as putting everything into a brown paper bag so students could put their waste inside the bags and then into the trash.

*“I’m going to probably say her enthusiasm (laughs), Penny’s enthusiasm for wanting, just her leadership in the whole program, getting staff involved, teachers and custodial staff, talking to kitchen staff, talking to students.” – Albany Area High School Principal*

### **3.5.3 Role of Principal or Administrator**

Principal’s involvement can be described using a spectrum from very minimally involved to hands on involvement. Some study participants described the principal as the point of contact person for the breakfast study and assisted in gathering data that the foodservice staff did not have readily available, coordinated the students and the study personnel. Many participants reported that the principal was there for administrative support, helped get teachers onboard with the program, communicated with teachers about changes, talked with custodial staff about waste, changed policies (such as eating in the classrooms), as well as iron out any conflicts that students or staff had and were flexible with any concerns

that may have risen. Many of the principals were onboard with the students eating in the classrooms and/or in the halls of the school.

A few study participants described the principal's role in the study as very hands on and a true advocate for the school breakfast program changes. One study participant described the foodservice director as being busy with other schools and worked primarily 50 miles away so he was in charge of the entire program. These principals organized and managed the planning and implementation of the Grab and Go breakfast cart along with the foodservice staff. The principals had a great relationship with the foodservice staff, were very supportive and encouraging of the changes they wanted to implement, would meet regularly with foodservice staff to discuss the cart layout, location and menu items as well as daily updates on how the program was going. The principals would manage and/or be a part of the Grab and Go planning committee. They helped with promoting the new SBP by making announcements, assisting the students in working with Community Blue Print and even took starring roles in the promotional videos. Many of the principals had very upbeat, positive, enthusiastic attitudes and really got people and students involved in the planning and promoting process. The principals would organize kick-off meetings for teachers and staff to discuss the new program changes. One of the study participants described the principal getting the marketing teacher involved with a very successful student-driven marketing campaign. The principals also communicated with foodservice through email. Many of the principals were the liaison between foodservice, teachers and study personnel. One of the study participants described the principal's role as one to educate the teachers and staff about changes.

A few study participants described the principal as being minimally involved in making changes to the SBP. Many of the principals were involved in the first few meetings, but then really decreased their time and attention for the program. Some of the principals initially talked to students about the program and handed over the reigns to the foodservice director. Many of the principals met with foodservice staff to get updates and make sure everything was on track. One study participant described the principal as being supportive and facilitative, but really had the foodservice director take the lead on the project. Another study participant described handing the entire project over to the foodservice staff and attended meetings once in a while to be updated on the program's progress. One study participant described the administration actually as a barrier to making changes to the SBP because she couldn't get past some of the school policies to implement a successful program. Another study participant reported the principal as being a positive team player along the sidelines.

*"They had a pretty active group led by their high school principal, which I think really helped their implementation because he was on board, felt it was a great idea and put together a really good group of students and staff, both site level staff as well as food service staff and you know his enthusiasm and desire to see this be successful, I think, really helped with the planning of the program too. He's just a very upbeat principal, and I think he set the tone for "We're going to do this. And it's going to be a good thing" and that's exactly what happened." – Montevideo Foodservice Director*

#### **3.5.4 Staff Roles**

School staff other than teachers, foodservice staff and administration played a much smaller role in the SBP changes. Some of the school staff such as the nurse or social worker were part of the Grab and Go planning committees. Some study participants described staff as either being onboard, receptive and enthusiastic to SBP changes, while other personnel at other schools were hard to sway because they were not thrilled with possible changes in their duties. Some study participants even discussed how staff such as the personnel in the guidance office would work with the study personnel to ensure data collection.

*“Well, I think, to be honest with you, it’s been a ton of work on this end. I know Nancy in our guidance office, she’s kind of been the main contact, Nancy Pinke and just you know when the initial coming out and getting weights of kids, and the testing and all that stuff, and you know the emails and the data collection and I mean it was a lot of work for the whole process.” – St. James Principal*

### **3.5.5 Teachers**

During the breakfast study, many study participants described teachers as being receptive to the Grab and Go breakfast and allowing students to eat in their classrooms, excuse tardy students who were in the back of the breakfast lunch line as well as place posters and flyers promoting the SBP in their classrooms. Some teachers were a part of the SBP changes planning committee. Although some study participants reported that teachers had an initial fear of students being disruptive or messy in the classrooms, they found that students were actually very responsible with the Grab and Go breakfast. One study participant described having an initial mess left in the locker rooms, but after working with foodservice staff to package the breakfast differently, and talked to students about the mess, this issue was resolved. Other teachers, such as the marketing, art and drama teachers took charge of the marketing piece of the Grab and Go breakfast program in their schools. Another study participant even described how the welding class created stands for the Grab and Go breakfasts. Some study participants described teachers as being very positive about the SBP changes and would get breakfast and eat with the students. Other study participants reported that their teachers may not have been entirely onboard with the changes, but they were happy the teachers did not sabotage the program.

*“Again, it varies by teacher. I think we haven’t seen a \_\_\_ to tardiness for second hour, so my guess is that they’re within the door within a couple of seconds. They’re probably okay with it. And our teachers, they’re pretty good. They know which kids aren’t necessarily always eating regularly at home so they would rather have them eat than not eat. I mean, we haven’t seen any behavior referrals at all linked to this.” – Owatonna Principal*

## **3.6 Student Role or Involvement**

### **3.6.1 Role of Students**

Student buy-in was instrumental to the success of the Grab and Go breakfast program. Most study participants supported student involvement throughout the planning and implementation of the SBP changes and recruited students from the student body, student council, and the National Honor Society to participate on planning and marketing committees. Students were involved in taste testing menu items and providing feedback, handing out samples to other students and/or parents during open houses, answering questions about the SBP changes, as well as communicating to staff, peers, faculty, school board members and newspapers about the program. One study participant described their students leading presentations regarding the Grab and Go breakfast program to faculty members, students, school board members, maintenance staff and newspaper reporters. Study participants reported that peer-to-peer marketing and communicating was one of the most influential components to obtain student participants. Students led marketing campaigns from creating posters, choosing a theme of their campaign, to creating videos. One study participant described the theme of their program included everyone in their school and they had a very successful program. Another study participant reported having a student representative attend the initial Project Breakfast workshop. Students were also the subject of the study and so worked with the research team to collect data. Student input was important for the success of the program.

Some study participants described their program as having low participation, students weren't receptive to the program, but they were also not involved in any of the planning for the program changes.

*"We've presented it at the school board meeting and it was the students, again, that did the presentation, even though I was present and the senior high food service staff, many of them were present but yet it was the students that did the actual presentation, and when we were interviewed by the newspaper afterwards, again, it was student-led."*

*"And this was something, if the students were going to help us sell this and really be involved in it, we needed their commitment and everything, and they really—we had 6 phenomenal individuals, one young man and 5 gals that just really did a tremendous job in communicating this to their student body. They also did the initial presentation to the senior high faculty, which was a huge change, because we—even though we all know that there is food in the classroom, it was a policy that there was not food anywhere else but in the commons. And so providing kiosks in various locations around the school, whether it was first breakfast or second breakfast was going to be a major change for staff, and again, it was the students that did the presentation." –Bemidji High School Foodservice Director*

### **3.6.2 Student Feedback**

Student input was very influential to the Grab and Go breakfast at many of the study schools. Students were very vocal about their likes and dislikes and were not afraid to share their thoughts to foodservice personnel, teachers or other students. Many study participants described doing taste tests with their students and having students vote or survey regarding their preferences. Other study participants described asking for informal student feedback right on the line. This feedback not only shapes menu items that are offered, but also how they are offered. One study participant reported that students were very vocal about not liking how the Grab and Go breakfasts were pre-packaged and instead they wanted the breakfast items to be ala carte. The school obliged and changed their breakfast cart offerings to be an ala carte system rather than a brown-bag system. Another study participant described how upset students were when the school couldn't offer the second chance breakfast because of staff absences.

*"I hear from teachers that they would like—what they're hearing from the kids is they want more of the ala carte choice on these outpost stations. During the breakfast week we only allowed a full reimbursable breakfast to be purchased, and at all the different places, the kids told us that no, we don't want everything that's in the package, we want to be able to buy ala carte items—a single piece of pizza rather than the whole breakfast. And so we've had to go back to that." – Thief River Falls Foodservice Director*

### **3.6.3 Student Leadership**

SEE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

## **3.7 Support of Research and Extension**

### **3.7.1 Role of Extension**

The role of extension was to support the study participants through the SBP changes. Study participants described extension as positive, enthusiastic, supportive, and knowledgeable. Many of the study participants were glad extension was there to keep them on track. Study participants also reported the 3-ring binder was very useful for materials and references. Study participants described extension assisting with coordinating meetings and managing the data collection at their school and thought that extension was a great liaison between the school and the University of Minnesota. Study participants also reported asking extension for ideas on how to implement some aspects of the Grab and Go breakfast and thought that extension was very accessible and informative. One study participant would have liked more help with their expansion team, but did not reach out to extension for this.

*“Well, they were very accessible, they were very informative, they were there, they visited with us. They answered questions, they called—whatever, you know, they followed-up. They checked up on us, which was good, to see how things were going. I mean, they did an excellent job all the way around on that. When we needed some help in different areas, they were right there for us. So they have been through this. They answered our questions. I know we had different questions for them. They were able to answer the majority of them. So I mean, without those gals, and their input and their feedback and their expertise, I don’t know how we would—you know, because they’d been through it. They were positive in helping us get this going.” – Willmar Principal*

### **3.7.2 Role of Research Team**

The research team was responsible for finding schools to participate in the study, recruit students in the schools, collect data throughout the Project Breakfast study and provide trainings and support to study participants. Many study participants described the study team as being extremely positive and enthusiastic. The research team shared different ideas and suggestions for planning and implementing the Grab and Go breakfast. The research team was very accessible throughout the study to answer questions or concerns and study participants described them as very responsive and fast. The research team also kept the study participants on task with the proposed timeline and made sure schools followed through with reporting, which many study participants appreciated. The research team offered many helpful materials such as webinars, trainings, and the 3-ring binder of various materials that study participants were happy to use and refer to throughout the study. A few study participants enjoyed having the research team connect them with other schools that were also participating in the study to share ideas as well as learning from other school’s programs. Many study participants felt that the research team did a very great job of setting up the program, offering ideas, going to schools frequently, and giving suggestions for the advertising piece and helping with Community Blue Print. One study participant appreciated the teamwork between the University of Minnesota and their school. Many of the study participants were grateful for the additional funding they received with the grant to purchase equipment and supplies to change their SBP. Many study participants described the research team as opening their eyes to expanding their breakfast program, second chance and the grab and go breakfast models. Schools started to see the need in changing their breakfast programs once they saw the statistics with students and the benefits of eating breakfast. Many study participants were really appreciative of the grant and for being in the program and thought it was a really positive experience to work with the University of Minnesota.

Although most study participants felt the research team and extension did a great job of kicking-off the program, providing helpful materials and support, some study participants described being in the study as overwhelming. These participants wanted more ideas or the research team to go to their school more often to receive more input from the research team. They also felt a little confused after the kick-off workshop. Some study participants described the staffing transitions that occurred at the University of Minnesota as messy and made it more difficult to find the right person to talk to. Another study participant thought it was too much work to set up the data collection and to get the necessary information to the research team.

*“I think it was guidance from your guys’ end on how to do it, coming and supporting that, asking questions, connecting with us, helping with the marketing. You know, being able to buy that, you know I think that the fact that we’re able to get another kiosk, and I’m assuming that some of that came from some of the dollars that we were able to gather through going through this study, I guess I’m not sure on that, but that has definitely benefited and I think it was just the teamwork that happened with, and you guys leading it.” – Hutchinson Principal*

### 3.7.3 Student Data

Many study participants described reviewing the student data and using it to shape their Second Chance Breakfast program by understanding the importance of sampling breakfast cart items, location and timing of the second chance breakfast. A study participant described sharing the student data with the local newspaper to create awareness around the breakfast program changes and why it was important. Another study participant used the student data to get onboard with the program as well as to get staff on board. Although some study participants used the student data, many participants did not use the data at all. Some participants reported never seeing the data, or seeing the data, but not using it. Another study participant reported that it was hard to collect the student data.

*“I’d say one thing is the survey. The survey results that told us that our students are not hungry before school starts and that quite a few of them don’t want to take the time to eat breakfast in coming to school, whether they eat it at home or at school. That’s what directed us towards the second chance breakfast....”*

*“We shared that with the community. We had a news article come on in the paper, and I talked about that survey results kind of drove that decision making. Taste testing was important too. It let our people that were in Food Service know what kind of things they should be looking to order and what students wouldn’t want to eat.” – Montevideo Principal*

## 4 Impact of program

### 4.1 Going Well

Many study participants reported that the changes they made to the SBP including offering a Grab and Go and/or a second chance breakfast was going really well. They have fantastic programs and have seen an increase in student participation in the breakfast program.

*“I thought the idea was great and it worked really, really well, really well. We’ve been very happy with our numbers.” – LeSueur Henderson Food Service Director*

### 4.2 Impact on Food Service

ALSO SEE STAFF ROLES: FOODSERVICE STAFF

Many study participants described the SBP changes as having a positive impact on food service. One study participant reported the SBP changes and the increase in participation did not affect or negatively impact the School Lunch Program (SLP), which they were initially concerned about. Another study participant also described the Grab and Go cart allowed students to have more time interacting with the food service staff and this helped change perceptions of the department for the better.

*“I also think this program, Gran and Go, Second Chance Breakfast, whatever you want to call it, presents a good image of our food service department for students. That, you know, we’re here to serve them. We’re here to meet their needs and I think it indirectly affected participation at lunch too, meaning that students are more comfortable coming to lunch, and having lunch so it has not hurt our lunch counts, I want to say. – New London Spicer Food Service Director*

### 4.3 Impact on Maintenance Staff

ALSO SEE STAFF ROLES: JANITORIAL OR MAINTENANCE

At the beginning of the Grab and Go breakfast cart implementation, many study participants worried about the students keeping the school clean. Study participants described garbage as not being an issue at all because students have been very responsible and pick up after themselves. The Grab and Go breakfast has minimally impacted maintenance staff. A few study participants reported spills that occur, but also stated that spills happen anyways. One study participant reported that the custodial staff was a major barrier to the success of the Grab and Go breakfast in their school. The custodial staff would not let the food service director put the breakfast cart where she originally wanted it and would only allow her to keep it right outside of the cafeteria.

*“Like I said, we were worried that kids weren’t going to throw their stuff in the garbage and that we were going to have problems, but its really been pretty good. We’ve had a few accidents, but we have accidents all the time. I don’t see any intentional abuse of any of the breakfast stuff.” – LaSueur-Henderson Principal*

#### **4.4 Impact on School Climate**

Study participants described the changes to the School Breakfast Program as mostly positive. Changing the SBP helped build and maintain positive relationships between students, teachers, food service staff and administration. One study participant described how teachers would take and eat the breakfast with the students. Another study participant reported the rapport that grew between the students and food service staff throughout the promotion, implementation and maintenance of the Grab and Go breakfast. Another study participant also discussed how the new Grab and Go breakfast took the stigma out of taking breakfast for high school students. Before Project Breakfast, students believed the SBP was only for students receiving free or reduced meals. A few study participants stated they believe the Grab and Go breakfast reduced disciplinary issues and improved student behavior. One study participant even described how students seem to socialize more with each other. The Grab and Go breakfast has become part of the school day in most schools. Study participants reported that the second chance breakfast is filling a need for students and the program has only been upbeat and positive for their schools. Only one study participant described some of the students as having a bad attitude towards the Grab and Go breakfast because they felt they were being forced to do it.

*“I’ll tell you, when I’ve been there, its upbeat and positive. If it’s always that way, then it has not hurt it. You know again, it’s fulfilling a need that these students are telling us they want, be coming in and having breakfast. So yeah, I think it’s positively impacted the climate.” – New London Spicer Food Service Director*

#### **4.5 Impact on Staff**

ALSO SEE STAFF ROLES: TEACHERS

Study participants describe teachers as being very flexible with students eating the Grab and Go breakfast in their classrooms as well as with students being a little tardy to their class. A few study participants describe the teachers as creating lesson plans so students can be a little late and have time to eat their breakfasts in class.

*“But you know, the other thing too is just our overall classroom teachers and the flexibility that they’ve given the students, because they do show up a little bit late to that second period class, particularly those that are at the end of the line. And that can be anywhere from 2 minutes to maybe 5 or 6. So they, you know, our teachers have been wonderful about adjusting their lessons during that particular period because they know that they’re going to have, in some cases, a handful of students to 10 students gone for those first couple of minutes of class. So that’s been a real plus too.” – Apollo Senior High School Principal*

## 4.6 Impact on Students

The Grab and Go breakfast has had a substantial impact on high school students within Project BreakFAST. Many study participants describe the participation in the school breakfast program as increasing substantially since implementing the Grab and Go breakfast cart. Students are able to eat a healthy meal in the morning, which has filled a need in the student population. Many study participants would like to suggest the Grab and Go breakfast and increased breakfast participation has caused positive changes in attendance, illness, student behavior, failures (reduced) and alertness. The Grab and Go cart has changed student perceptions of the SBP, so they know it is okay for them to take school breakfast.

*“Well, we just hope that these students when they come to school, if they haven’t eaten anything that they have an opportunity to put something in their system so that they probably do better on their homework or the class during the day and eventually the tests that they’re taking in there. We hope that they are happier human beings, that they don’t go hungry.” – Willmar Principal*

## 4.7 Increased Participation Rates

Many study participants have seen a moderate to high increase in participation in the School Breakfast Program. Many study participants describe the reason for the increase in participation is due to offering choices, students being able to visually see the breakfast cart, convenience, easier access, announcements, new products on the cart and second chance breakfast.

*“Increasing participation and providing a service that we weren’t providing before, I guess. Participation for breakfast, like I said, was so minimal before, it was like if we can even double that, get to 50, and I was going to be pleased with it. To see it be in the 200s has been just really a wonderful thing.” – Montevideo Food Service Director.*

## 4.8 Kids ready to eat – second chance breakfast

Study participants described how students were not ready to eat breakfast early in the morning before, or at the start of school, and second chance breakfast offered students a chance to eat breakfast when they were ready. One study participant also commented on students who run into school a minute or so before or after the bell rings and do not have a chance to eat breakfast.

*“Definitely the second chance breakfast is, we do serve almost twice as many students at the second chance breakfast than we do in the first and so we know that that is definitely –kids come to school and they aren’t ready to eat. Or they barely make it there and into their first hour class before they–“ – Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

# 5 Future Thinking

## 5.1 Advice for other schools

Food service directors and principal had a lot of great advice for schools that are considering modifying their school breakfast programs. First they suggested that interested schools talk to schools that have implemented grab and go or second chance breakfast. Ask questions such as; what does their line look like, what are they serving, what are the popular food items, are they making a profit, has it been worth it.

Form an initial proposal to bring to administration, anticipate questions and or negative feedback, and be prepared to address concerns or questions.

Don't be afraid to try it, the majority of food service directors interviewed have been pleased with the results and report that it has been worth the effort.

When planning for your new program, involve key players from the very beginning, make sure administration district wide and at the school level are involved in the planning. Involve food service staff and teachers and or coaches. Involve students, having them on board in the beginning and incorporating their suggestions into the program is important. Continue to listen to student feedback such as comments as they go through the line. Some schools involved students groups such as the business class to work on marketing or the drama students to help plan a kick off. Finally, it is important to gain the support of the custodial staff, involving them in the planning process will provide an opportunity to address their concerns early on.

While creating your plan for a modified school breakfast program take into account the following:

- Menus, plan for taste testing breakfast items
- Equipment such as carts, coolers, point of sale machines
- Staffing
- Location of carts, high traffic, easy to get cart to that location (pushing on carpet, transporting on the elevator)
- Marketing, marketing and more marketing
- County health inspector approval
- Policy changes, do current policies regarding food in the hallways and or classrooms need to be changed, policies related to tardiness (when students are late due to grabbing breakfast)
- Passing times, do they need to be adjusted to accommodate for grab and go or second chance options

Food service directors suggested setting measurable goals such as the percent of increased participation you would like to see.

Communication was cited as a very important when planning and implementing a modified breakfast program. Communicate changes early to staff (both teachers and food service), with emphasis on the importance of breakfast. Buy in will come easier if staff understands the reasons for the changes and the anticipated benefits. Communicate to households and students; let them know about the new options.

Finally, after implementation, be flexible and open to changing the program (including expanding!) as needed. Monitor revenue and expenditures and student participation. Stay on top of counts (if fluctuating, consider introducing new menu items), keep menus new and different but balanced with some consistency.

*I think first of all, administrative buy in at the site level, it is always good to have those conversations right away as to what you are doing, but going into that meeting I think you have be able to address what might be the negative comments that you might receive.*

*Set some goals, what are you trying to accomplish, are you trying to increase participation by a certain percent, are you just trying to offer a different option for students? What is the goal, of doing it and try to have that decided very early on. Honestly, keep it as streamlined and simple as possible.*

*Communication, especially with food service staff, particularly the head cooks and the staff that will be involved. And then figuring out ways to communicate with your households that you are going to start this program and what will be available for students. – Willmar High School Food Service Director*

*Have a committee including principal, teaching staff, students, custodial, food service, you know, have a good strong planning committee when starting your project. – Montevideo Senior High School Food Service Director*

### **5.1.1 Staff and student Driven**

Involving students early will help the student body accept the new program. Identify students to help with the project, consider entrepreneur type students, students viewed as leaders by their peers and students that will advocate for the new program. Many schools had great success with marketing driven by the students.

*Best practices, again, listen, feedback, communication from the students is essential for the success because unless you're providing them with the variety of the foods that they will actually ingest, it won't serve a purpose and everything. Streamlining it, trying to provide sufficient labor and yet not over-establishing specific people to do specific jobs. - Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

### **5.1.2 Stay on track**

Food service directors suggested monitoring student participation, expenditures and revenue. Consider introducing new items if participation is fluctuating.

*You know, we would always review, again, locations and the food. We're always looking for new ideas; our vendors assist us with that. They know that these programs are very important to us and to the students that we serve, and so they're usually trying to help us find new opportunities. – Apollo Senior High School Principal*

*I've been monitoring their participation counts every month, just to see if we're maintaining so that's important. Looking at percent participation, looking at revenue versus expenditures related to this breakfast program. Looking at sustainability is also looking at making sure that we don't get stagnant, in terms of products that we're offering. We're continually looking for items that would fit the requirements of the Grab N Go program, and changing it up so the students keep coming back because any time you become stagnant, it means that participation might be affected. – Montevideo Senior High School Food Service Director*

### **5.1.3 Take advantage of opportunities**

Stay open to funding opportunities that come up, such as grants, research project. Opportunities such as these can help expand your program and provide opportunities you would not normally have available.

*The opportunity that this provided us was phenomenal. I can't say enough about that. And when those opportunities come by, sometimes people think it's just more work, or more, you know, but it's not. It just helps accentuate everything that you're trying to do so I just think that the opportunity that these research studies, the grants, whatever, and everything provide for food service is remarkable. – Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

## **5.2 Middle and Elementary School Breakfast Programs**

One food service director reported that their high school grab and go model has been successfully replicated with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in a different school within their district. Another food service director reports obtaining grants for expanding school breakfast within the middle school.

*We took this idea and moved it to our 4th and 5th graders at Hilltop elementary. We received a breakfast challenge grant, sponsored by a bunch of different companies and so forth. It was a \$2,400 dollar grant and then each increase in breakfast, I believe it's 24 cents that will also go to us to help promote breakfast. But that has been going well. We're doubling our numbers there as well. –LeSueur Henderson High School Food Service Director*

### **5.3 Sustainability**

Food service directors and principals measured sustainability by participation counts and sales. Other considerations for sustainability included being able to accommodate carts without causing a disruption, being able to sustain staffing and policy changes can be made allowing eating in the classroom and hallway. Sustainability also depends on keeping the price and servicing size of grab and go/second chance competitive with the nearby convenience stores.

One school reported that they are incorporating space for their grab and go carts into the new school building plans. Another school is considering duplicating grab and go for an afterschool program providing snacks for students that stay after school for activities.

*I just think that this is a program that will continue, because it has become part of the school day now. And that's, it's too bad that breakfast and lunch programs are not totally seen as that, that they complement what is going on in the classroom, and that it should just be part of the entire educational day. And I think, from my perspective, that the high school has got it, that they've figured out that this is good for kids, this is good for what they're doing here, getting their education, it's just good overall, make sense, makes common sense to do this. –Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

*As far as staffing, we basically worked it into their existing day and it really increased productivity as a result. I'm always looking at meals per labor hour at least when we're looking at budgets—monitoring budgets, I get the financial revenue and expenditures from their business manager several times throughout the year, so I'm looking at that and are we on track with where we should be with expenses and offsetting that with revenue. – New London Spicer High School Food Service Director*

### **5.4 What could have been done differently**

When asked what they could have been done differently, food service directors and principals indicated that they could have done a better job with marketing the program. Some thought they could have used more marketing materials such as posters and educational sound bites related to the benefits of breakfast.

I guess, you know if I took part in this program again, I would add is the educational marketing side of it, we should have done more marketing with the education side of it and we didn't do a whole lot of marketing with it. – Albany Area High School Food Service Director

## **6 Good Quotes**

*Well, it's just been a wonderful experience; I'm thrilled that we were able to be a part of the grant. To learn new things, receive different feedback and see things from different perspectives. Anything we can do to help get healthy breakfasts and lunches into the kids' little mouths (laughs) in the best way possible is just—I'm thrilled to be part of any of that. - Albany Area High School*

*It's definitely proved to be fantastic as far as participation levels. The kids really are appreciating it, and they miss it when it's not available. If we have a late start due to weather we aren't able to provide a second chance breakfast. The kids definitely miss it when we don't have it, especially those that have a later lunch period. - Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

*I have a senior high food staff that is remarkable, and whenever we discuss new and possible programs, they are probably the first to say, let's go for it. Let's try it. They know that their work is for the kids, and anything that they can do to help promote health and nutrition and a positive program for the kids, they jump at every chance. This program would not be feasible if it wasn't for their attitude, ability and their can-do attitude. I mean, they're a fantastic group of people, they do a great job. - Bemidji High School Food Service Director*

*We had a pretty active planning group led by the high school principal, which I think really helped the implementation because he was on board, felt it was a great idea and put together a really good group of students and staff, both site level staff as well as food service staff. His enthusiasm and desire to see this be successful, I think, really helped with the planning of the program too. He's just a very upbeat principal, and I think he set the tone for "We're going to do this. And it's going to be a good thing" and that's exactly what happened. – Montevideo Senior High School Food Service Director*

*You know, when it comes to participating in grants, some schools, and even myself, shy away from doing grants occasionally because of the extra work and the extra paperwork. I've pretty much learned by being part of this grant that the benefit, particularly to our students, was well worth the extra work. It made us think outside the box in terms of how we were going to administer a Grab N Go program. It made us look at the needs of the students and not just food service needs.*

*I also think this program, Grab N Go, Second Chance breakfast, whatever you want to call it, presents a good image of our food service department for students. That we are here to serve them, we're here to meet their needs, and I think it indirectly affected participation at lunch too, meaning that students are more comfortable coming to lunch, so it has not hurt our lunch counts.*

*But you know, I just think, overall, we're here, food service is here to make sure students get good nutritious meals and this is just another way for us to provide that, and to support the academic day for the students, and I think that this program is another way for us to do that.*

*I think breakfast filled a niche there that smart snacks created a gap for. - New London- Spicer High School Food Service Director*

*With all the challenges we've had in school nutrition since 2013 with the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, and some of the not so favorable changes we had to make, and the student reaction to those changes—this has been a positive addition. There was no negative pushback with this breakfast program, Grab N Go, Second Chance program, it has all been positive. And I think you know the credit to the U of MN staff who worked on it, as well as the planning at the site level, because, like I said, it's been very well-received and very positive and that hasn't been the case with everything that*

*we've done. So I just want to stop by saying that. Sometimes you get a program that really does work and this is one of them. - New London- Spicer High School Food Service Director*

*It's all about eating breakfast, whether it's here at school or whether it's at home, and to make sure it's a fairly healthy breakfast, you know.*

*We didn't have a lot of 9-12 graders eating breakfast, and now, obviously, we have a lot more that are eating breakfast because of our Grab N Go.*

*You know, are there still a few out there that are concerned? Yeah, and I think they have legitimate concerns and so we continue to work that out. And part of it is, you know, the custodians had their concerns about a mess, and so as those little things popped up, we educate, we educate, we educate, and things have gotten better.*

*We've gotten more efficient, and the kids know "don't dilly-dally around" you know, most of them kind of know what they're going to grab, our layout is very efficient. -New London- Spicer High School Principal*

*Question: What would you say was the biggest challenge or barrier in modifying the school breakfast program?*

*Answer: It was the policies, no support really. - St. James High School, Food Service Director*

*We were I think a little skeptical of having a breakfast cart in between blocks 1 and 2 because we thought, you know, as any assistant principal, you'd be thinking, okay, what are the ramifications of this? How many kids are going to be late? Are we going to have problems with this and everything? Since we started with the second cart we've never had a problem it's been very, very positive.*

*I was very skeptical to begin with because I reverted back to saying that we pride ourselves on keeping the school clean, and worked hard to keep all the food in the cafeteria and then we kind of went to opening it all up and everything but we've been pleasantly surprised you know how still neat the school is. We've told the kids to make sure they make sure they throw their wrappers away, which they have and everything and we have very, very little spillage around the place, so it's been a very positive experience. -Willmar High School Principal*

