



**SCHOOL:** Hawthorne School, Missoula, Montana  
**DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES:** Val Addis  
**EXPANDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM:** Free Breakfast; Breakfast in the Classroom

### ★ BACKGROUND

When Val Addis arrived in Missoula she brought 30 plus years of school nutrition experience with her and was ready to make some changes. Her philosophy about school breakfast is that “this is not a food service program, it is academic support.” Principal Steve McHugh agrees. He agreed to pilot the program and soon became an advocate for doing what’s right for kids. Prior to beginning Breakfast in the Classroom, fewer than one- third of students participated. Now nearly 95 percent eat breakfast.

### ★ IMPLEMENTATION

Addis, the district’s director of nutrition services, began offering breakfast free of charge to all students in the classroom. With 58 percent Free/Reduced, reimbursement covers all students. Under the program, food is delivered to the classroom just before the bell rings. Hot breakfasts are served three days a week. The first 10 minutes of the school day is devoted to children eating breakfast at their desks. Students who choose to participate in the breakfast program pick up breakfast and eat at their desks while teachers take attendance, read aloud, work through the daily math problem or make daily announcements. Time spent over breakfast allows the children to quietly and easily settle into the school day without lost instructional time.

### ★ IMPACT

Now that children no longer need to sacrifice their play time for breakfast, participation in the school breakfast program exceeds 90 percent. Addis notes that tardies are down 15 percent and absences are down 2 to 3 percent since the breakfast program began. The school nurse isn’t busy with morning headaches and stomachaches. “They went away with breakfast.”

### ★ WORDS OF ADVICE

Let the teachers be your advocates. Addis’ breakfast program expanded to other schools due to principals and teachers talking to other about the positive impact on students.

Simple changes can make all the difference. The custodian is delighted not to have to ready the Commons after breakfast for gym. Custodians report less food and paper filling the trash than during traditional breakfast because more kids are eating their breakfast in the time allowed. After breakfast, teachers place a small trash bag in the hallway and custodians remove the bags when convenient.

Addis says: “This program allows us to leave money in the classroom. Because we can be more self-sufficient, I don’t need to request capital funds to repair or buy equipment so that leaves more money for education needs.”

McHugh says there is no reason not to do Breakfast in the Classroom. Kids love breakfast and enter the classroom calmer.