



# Key Milestones in the Life of the School Breakfast Program

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**1966:** The Child Nutrition Act establishes the School Breakfast Program as a pilot program giving priority to schools in areas with poor economic conditions and schools to which children traveled long distances to attend. Schools designated as “Severe Need” are eligible for greater assistance. The same Act authorizes funds for Non-food Assistance (equipment) and State Administrative Expenses and clarifies that all federal child nutrition programs are to be administered by USDA.

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**1968:** *Their Daily Bread*, a report on the National School Lunch Program by a coalition of national women’s organizations, focuses national attention on the failure of school food programs to meet the needs of low-income children. Hunger in America becomes a major public issue. Congress authorizes use of funds (in addition to commodities) from Section 32 to expand provision of meals to needy children.

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**1968:** Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs is established.

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**1969:** The Black Panther Party begins serving breakfast to schoolchildren in major cities across the nation.

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**1969:** The Food and Consumer Service is established within the USDA to oversee all food assistance programs.

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**1970:** Amendments to the National School Lunch Act establish uniform minimum national income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price meals.

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**1971:** School Breakfast Program is required to use the same income eligibility guidelines as the National School Lunch Program. USDA orders a freeze on the number of schools in the School Breakfast program and proposes regulations restricting the use of Section 32 funds for school food. Congress passes an Emergency Resolution to prevent these proposals from taking effect.

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**1972:** Guaranteed minimum reimbursement rates for school lunches are established by Congress, and the Secretary of Agriculture is required to establish national average payments to states for each breakfast served.

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**1973:** Performance Funding replaces categorical grants as basic funding structure for school meals. Minimum mandatory reimbursement rates are established by Congress for full price, reduced price, and free school breakfasts and for free breakfasts in severe need schools, and reimbursement rates for both lunch and breakfast are required to be adjusted semi-annually for inflation.

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**1975:** The School Breakfast Program is made permanent.

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**1977:** Amendments require states to establish eligibility standards for severe need schools.

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**1977:** Provision Two is added to Section 11 of the NSLA, permitting schools that agree to serve meals free of charge to all students to collect applications in a base year and apply the percentages of free, reduced price and full price eligible meals from that year to three subsequent years without collecting additional applications.

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**1978:** Congress establishes criteria that states must use to determine which schools qualify for severe need reimbursement, including all schools in which at least 40% of lunches were served free or at a reduced price, and all schools in states with statewide School Breakfast Mandates.

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**1980:** The first set of Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Americans is issued.

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**1980:** Budget Cuts, Round 1: The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1980 reduces the income eligibility standards for free and reduced price meals, cuts reimbursement rates, replaces semi-annual inflation adjustments with a single annual adjustment, and eliminates School Breakfast Commodity Assistance.

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**1981:** Budget cuts Round 2: The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 further lowers income eligibility standards and reduced reimbursements for paid and reduced price breakfasts. The maximum allowable charge for a reduced price breakfast is raised from 10 cents to 30 cents. The provision of severe-need rate reimbursements for all meals served in schools with a statewide mandate is eliminated. Between fiscal year 1981 and fiscal year 1982, participation in the School Breakfast Program declines for the first time since the program's creation. The biggest drops are in the paid and reduced price categories, but because whole schools and districts drop out of the program, the number of free breakfasts declines as well.

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**1981:** The Reagan Administration proposes new, weakened nutrition standards as a way of cutting costs in school food programs (ketchup as a vegetable). Congress rebuffs the effort after advocates publicize it widely.

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**1983:** USDA releases the final report of the National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs, which shows that breakfasts in the SBP are low in vitamin A, vitamin B6 and iron.

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**1986:** Congress adds 3 cents to the reimbursement rates for school breakfasts and authorizes 3 cents of commodities per meal when available in USDA holdings. Congress directs the Secretary of Agriculture to improve the nutrition standards for school breakfast.

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**1986:** Offer Versus Serve (OVS) becomes an option in all school breakfast programs. (Breakfasts are reimbursable when students take at least three of the four components offered). Children in families receiving Food Stamps and AFDC are made automatically eligible for free school meals.

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**1988:** The Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 adds three cents to the school breakfast subsidy.

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**1989:** Congress authorizes five years of grant funding for school breakfast start-up costs.

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**1993:** The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment is released by USDA; it finds that school breakfasts are high in saturated fat and sodium.

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**1994:** The Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act required that school meals comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. USDA launches Team Nutrition and the School Meals Initiative to help schools improve the nutritional profile of school meals.

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**1996:** Legislation consolidating child nutrition programs into child nutrition block grants to the states, and thus ending the entitlement status, performance funding, and national nutrition standards, passes the House of Representatives but fails in the Senate, and the Senate prevails in conference.

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**1998:** Congress directs USDA to conduct a pilot test of universal free school breakfasts. The School Breakfast Pilot Project studies the impact of providing universal free school breakfasts in six school districts across the US.

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**2004:** The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act requires direct certification to be phased in, requires schools to develop wellness plans, and extends the certification period to one year, ending the requirement for reporting of income changes within the school year.

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**2005:** The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans have substantial implications for school meals. USDA asks the Institute of Medicine to craft new nutrition standards that reflect the latest science.

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**2010:** First Lady Michele Obama launches the “Let’s Move” campaign to combat childhood obesity.

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**2010:** Share Our Strength launches the No Kid Hungry campaign, focusing on summer meals and school breakfast.

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**2010:** Congress passes the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, which directs USDA to raise nutrition standards for both breakfast and lunch, establishes standards for snacks sold at school, and creates the Community Eligibility Option.

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**2011:** The Community Eligibility Program becomes available in the first three pilot states.

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**2013:** West Virginia passes the Feed to Achieve Act, requiring every school in the state to adopt at least one alternative delivery method for School Breakfast, and declaring an official goal to provide universal free school breakfast for all children in West Virginia through public-private partnerships. Eight states follow suit over the next three years.

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**2014:** The Community Eligibility Option becomes available to eligible schools in all states and the District of Columbia.

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**2014:** Congress passes a waiver of the whole grain requirement and a delay in implementing sodium reductions in school meals as part of an omnibus spending bill.

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**2016:** The School Breakfast Program celebrates its 50th birthday on October 11<sup>th</sup>.