

A RECIPE FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



A successful breakfast program goes far beyond the plate, serving as a daily invitation for students to show up, connect, and feel a sense of belonging. We have seen time and again that **when student voices are at the heart of a breakfast program, stigma fades, participation grows, and a stronger school community begins to take shape.** And when young people feel like active participants rather than passive recipients, the entire program — and the morning itself — is transformed.

To help schools bring meaningful student engagement to life, Breakfast Club of Canada has identified four key principles. Together, they lay the foundation for a breakfast program where every student feels seen, valued, and excited to start their day.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- **Let Youth Lead**
- **Connect and Collaborate**
- **Promote Knowledge Sharing**
- **Spark Joy and Belonging**



Let Youth Lead

Leadership is a skill best learned by doing. When students take the reins of the breakfast program — whether through a dedicated class, school club, or volunteer team — they gain hands-on experience in organization and teamwork, develop meaningful food literacy skills, and build confidence and a sense of responsibility, all with the steady support of the adults around them.

How to Integrate Student Leadership

- Students lead brainstorming sessions on menu planning, using our menu [planning toolkit](#), [Nutrition guidelines](#) and tools such as [Swap this for that](#).
- Students can create schedules and share responsibilities.
- Students can plan the marketing of their breakfast program: morning announcements, updates in newsletters, posters and signage.
- Students can create [environmental goals](#) for their breakfast program and incorporate things like recycling, composting, and reducing food waste.

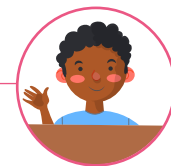


Connect and Collaborate

Collaboration thrives when everyone has a role to play. By creating meaningful opportunities for students to work together with people from various age groups and communities, schools build a space where relationships are formed, trust is developed, and a true sense of community takes root.

How to Integrate Connection and Collaboration

- Engage students through a mentoring program where older students actively train younger students to take over from year to year, building a self-sustaining mentorship cycle that ensures the program is always on the right track. This can be done between different classes, grades or student groups.
- Invite families, elders, community members or local partners to take part in special breakfast events when possible or integrate them where possible into the volunteer schedule to work alongside students.
- Partner with other school groups to enhance the breakfast program: art groups to design the menu, environmental club to help make the program more environmentally sustainable, podcast group to help advertise the program, etc.
- Encourage students to recognize and thank peers, staff and community volunteers who support the program.

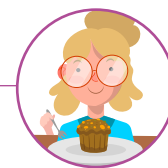


Promote Knowledge Sharing

Every person involved in the breakfast program brings something valuable to the table — a skill, an idea, or an experience worth sharing. When students, educators, and volunteers actively exchange what they know, the program and the school community grows stronger and becomes both more impactful and resilient over time.

How to Integrate Knowledge Sharing

- Encourage menu planning with diverse foods and recipes — examples can include integrating cultural recipes from peers and families, featuring [seasonal](#) and local produce, offering a variety of [proteins](#), and accounting for allergens and dietary restrictions (ex: [lactose](#)).
- Learn about food-related health and hygiene through coaching and workshops.
- Teach students real-world skills such as planning, budgeting, logistics and time management.
- Have students invite guest "chefs" to share their knowledge and inspire the program – examples can include family members, community leaders, local partners and farmers.
- Plan nutrition workshops through your school board.



Spark Joy and Belonging

Joy and belonging are contagious! When students see themselves reflected in their breakfast program, whether through the music playing, the familiar voices greeting them, or the conversations happening around the table, they feel seen, welcomed, and excited to show up every single morning.

How to Integrate Sparking Joy and Belonging

- Have an open-door policy in order to draw the diverse voices, experiences and cultures that represent the entire student body.
- Celebrate student contributions by presenting [certificates](#) during assemblies, daily announcements or appreciation events.
- Create moments of spontaneity that energize the program school-wide: pop-up breakfast club booths, voting on breakfast club menu ideas, theme days and [fun celebrations](#).

Refer to the [School's Corner](#) for
more ideas and resources!