COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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November 1, 2026

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair
Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
13th Floor, General Assembly Building
201 N. 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
12th Floor, General Assembly Building
201 N. 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Lucas and Delegate Torian:

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the alternative breakfast service model program from the 2025-2026 school year, as required by Item 125, 29.c.3, Chapter 1, 2026 Acts of Assembly. In total, 303 schools were funded to participate in the program in 2025-2026 and served more than 11 million breakfast meals during the school year. In alignment with the reporting requirements, we have included data on the following: chronic absenteeism rates, student attendance and tardy arrivals, office discipline referrals, student achievement measures, teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation, and the financial impact on the division's school food program.

If you have additional questions, please contact Christina Berta, Chief Operations Officer at (804) 225-2025 or christina.p.berta@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

Jenna Conway
Superintendent of Public Instruction
JC/SB/slt/am/

cc: The Honorable Abigail D. Spanberger

Report on the Alternative School Breakfast Service Models

Chapter 1, 2026 Acts of Assembly, Item 125, 29.c.3

Presented to: The Governor of Virginia and the Chairs of the Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committee

November 1, 2026



PREFACE

Item 125 29.c.1-3, Chapter 1, 2026 Acts of Assembly (Appendix A) directs:

> *c.1) Out of this appropriation, $1,074,000 the first year and $1,074,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to fund an After-the-Bell Model breakfast program available on a voluntary basis to elementary, middle, and high schools where student eligibility for free or reduced lunch exceeds 45.0 percent for the participating eligible school, and to provide additional reimbursement for eligible meals served in the current traditional school breakfast program at all grade levels in any participating school. The Department of Education is directed to ensure that only eligible schools receive reimbursement funding for participating in the After-the-Bell school breakfast model. The schools participating in the program shall evaluate the educational impact of the models implemented that provide school breakfasts to students after the first bell of the school day, based on the guidelines developed by the Department of Education and submit the required report to the Department of Education no later than August 31 each year.*
>
> *2) The Department of Education shall communicate, through Superintendent's Memo, to school divisions the types of breakfast serving models and the criteria that will meet the requirements for this State reimbursement, which may include, but are not limited to, breakfast in the classroom, grab and go breakfast, or a breakfast after first period. School divisions may determine the breakfast serving model that best applies to its students, so long as it occurs after the instructional day has begun. The Department of Education shall monthly transfer to each school division a reimbursement rate of $0.05 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in elementary schools and a reimbursement rate of $0.10 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in middle or high schools.*
>
> *3) No later than July 1 each year, the Department of Education shall provide for a breakfast program application process for school divisions with eligible schools, including guidelines regarding specified required data to be compiled from the prior school year or years and for the upcoming school year program. The number of approved applications shall be based on the estimated number of sites that can be accommodated within the approved funding level. The Department of Education shall set criteria for establishing priority should the number of applications from eligible schools exceed the approved funding level. The reporting requirements must include: chronic absenteeism rates, student attendance and tardy arrivals, office discipline referrals, student achievement measures, teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation, and the financial impact on the division's school food program. Funded schools that do not provide data by August 31 are subject to exclusion from funding in the following year. The Department of Education shall collect and compile the results of the breakfast program and shall submit the report to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees no later than November 1 following each school year.*

In school year (SY) 2025-2026, 303 schools (20 elementary schools and 283 secondary schools) with more than 45% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals applied for and were approved to receive Breakfast after the Bell (BaB) reimbursement. The additional reimbursement is designed to encourage the use of alternative serving methods for breakfast to increase student participation, support learning readiness, and help to address food insecurity. Schools receiving reimbursement through the BaB appropriation provided 11,234,612 breakfasts, or 20%, of the 56,146,616 breakfasts served to Virginia students in SY 2025-26.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ..... *iii*

Table of Contents *0*

Executive Summary *1*

Authority *1*

Overview *2*

Breakfast Meals Served *2*

Impact Survey *3*

Analysis of Student Achievement, Chronic Absenteeism, and Student Discipline Data *4*

Appendix *11*

Appendix A **11**

Executive Summary

Breakfast After the Bell (BaB) models can help address barriers to school breakfast, increase student access to breakfast, improve the classroom learning environment, and alleviate student hunger.

As required by Chapter 1 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) collected required data from schools receiving funding for the alternative breakfast service model in program year 2025-26.

Authority

Chapter 1 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly allotted funds to support schools that provide breakfast meals to eligible students through an alternative breakfast service model, commonly called Breakfast After the Bell. For this appropriation, VDOE is required to collect data from participating schools to evaluate the educational impact of the program and report the results to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees.

Overview

Many barriers, such as late transportation, inconvenient meal service locations, and social stigma prevent students from participating in traditional school breakfast service. Alternative breakfast service models, or BaB, overcome these barriers by providing breakfast after the school day begins or in locations other than the school cafeteria.

The implementation and expansion of BaB programs is one strategy that can support reducing chronic absenteeism, increasing classroom engagement, and improving overall student wellness. The most effective BaB models may include:

- Breakfast in the Classroom: Students eat breakfast in the classroom with their classmates and teacher. Breakfast can be served after the first bell or when students first arrive.
- Grab and Go: Students pick up breakfast meals from a central location as they arrive at school and eat in their classroom.
- Second Chance: Students receive breakfast during a break in the morning, typically after first period.

The 2026 Appropriations Act provides $1.074 million in state funds for the operation of BaB models implemented in the 2025-2026 school year. To receive funds, schools must have more than 45% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. State reimbursement of five cents ($0.05) per meal for elementary schools and ten cents ($0.10) per meal for secondary schools is received by schools that are approved for this additional state funding annually (Appendix A).

As required by Chapter 1 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, VDOE collected required data on program impact and other student measures from schools receiving funding for the BaB model in school year 2025-26.

Breakfast Meals Served

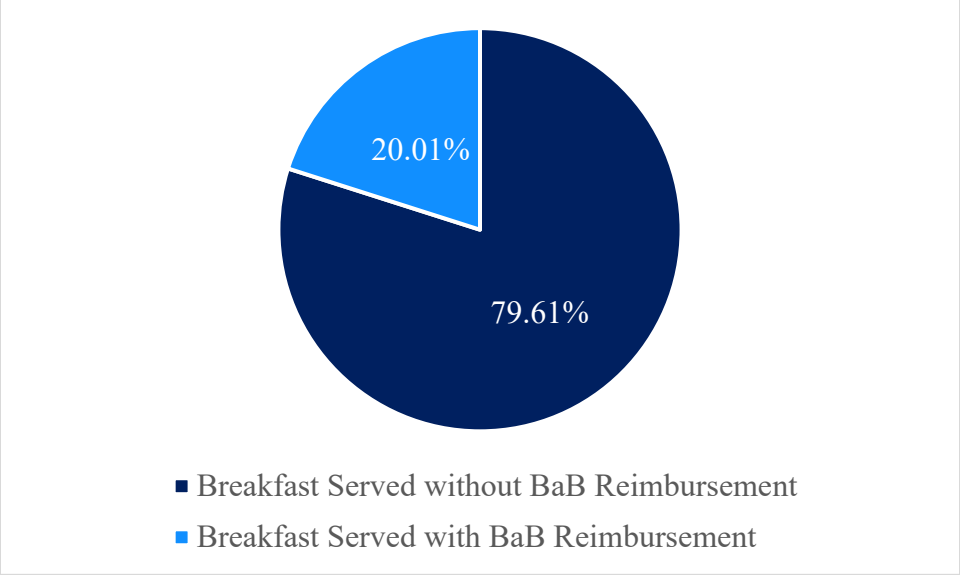
Schools were reimbursed monthly for meals served during SY 2025-26. A total of 303 schools received BaB reimbursement. 292 were originally awarded and received monthly reimbursement throughout the school year and, because of a reduced number of serving days due to bad weather and available funds, 11 additional eligible elementary schools were approved in May and received retroactive funding for meals served in August-April. A total of 11,234,612 breakfast meals served to students during SY 2025-26 were funded by the BaB reimbursement. Of those, 989,224 meals were served to elementary students, and 10,245,388 meals were served to secondary students (Table 1). These schools accounted for 20% of the 56,146,616 breakfasts served to students statewide in SY 2025-26 (Figure 1).

For the purposes of this report, the educational impact of BaB is analyzed with the 292 schools that were approved at the beginning of the school year and received the BaB reimbursement monthly.

Table 1. Breakfast Meals Served in BaB-Funded Schools by School Type, 2025-26 School Year

School Type	Number of Schools	Total Breakfast Meals Served
Elementary	20	989,224
Middle/High	283	10,245,388
Total	**303**	**11,234,612**

Figure 1. Proportion of Breakfast Meals Served that Received BaB Reimbursement, 2025-2026 School Year



IMPACT SURVEY

VDOE conducted a feedback survey of teachers, division and school administrators, and nutrition staff for schools and divisions receiving BaB funding. The survey collected feedback on the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation, and the financial impact on the division's school nutrition program.

A total of 2,273 individual staff members responded to the survey, including 1,219 teachers. Most respondents (86%) agreed that receiving alternative breakfast funding improved the ability to fund the school nutrition programs, and 69% of respondents felt BaB funding improved the overall breakfast service delivery. Most respondents (74%) agreed that more students eat breakfast as a result of BaB funding, with 64% of respondents agreeing that fewer students were hungry in the morning.

When asked about the impact of BaB on school academic performance, 49% of respondents agreed that it had improved performance, 42% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10% reported no impact. Most respondents did not see an improvement in attendance (59%) or student behavior (62%) as a result of BaB funding. Staff views on student outcomes were mixed. Academic performance, attendance, and student behavior are influenced by many factors beyond access to breakfast, including instructional quality, family circumstances, health, and school climate. These factors may also be related to whether students participate in BaB, making it difficult to isolate the program's effect. The survey responses only reflect staff perceptions and should not be interpreted as evidence of a causal effect.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) agreed that BaB funding reduced stigma around eating breakfast at school. In addition, 61% of respondents were satisfied with the alternative breakfast program at their school.

Analysis of Student Achievement, Chronic Absenteeism, and Student Discipline Data

In the 2025-26 school year, a total of 292 public schools and centers received BaB reimbursement during the school year. All regular public schools provided school-level data on chronic absenteeism and student behavior/discipline through the VDOE annual Student Record Collection (SRC) and Student Behavior and Administrative Response Collection (SBAR). Student assessment data were obtained from the assessment vendor and made available through VDOE.

The 25 public centers or other institution types participated in BaB as serving entities, but their data for these metrics were reported indirectly through their affiliated public schools or school divisions, which serve as the official reporting entities.

This quantitative analysis focuses on the 267 regular public schools that received BaB funding during the school year, which consists of nine elementary schools (3%), 131 middle schools (49%), and 127 high schools (48%) (Table 2). Combined schools and prekindergarten schools were excluded due to small sample sizes that would not allow for meaningful comparisons.

Table 2. BaB and Non-BaB funded schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	Non-BaB schools	BaB Schools
1	Elementary	287	0
	Middle	73	6
	High	76	6
2	Elementary	254	0
	Middle	64	24
	High	62	40
3	Elementary	264	1
	Middle	40	55
	High	37	44
4	Elementary	291	8
	Middle	32	46
	High	23	37

To account for differences in school demographics, we divided all Virginia public schools into four quartiles based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, using 2025-2026 fall membership data. Quartiles are a statistical method of dividing schools into four equal-sized groups, from the least to the most economically disadvantaged:

- Quartile 1: Schools with the lowest percentages of economically disadvantaged students (more affluent schools).
- Quartile 2 and Quartile 3: Schools with moderate concentrations of economically disadvantaged students.
- Quartile 4: Schools with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students (most disadvantaged schools).

This stratification allows us to compare outcomes, such as assessment pass rates, chronic absenteeism, and behavior incidents, between BaB schools and their non-BaB peers within comparable socioeconomic contexts.

BaB funded schools have a higher proportion of students who are economically disadvantaged when compared to non-funded schools (Table 3). Only 4% of BaB schools fall in the lowest quartile of economically disadvantaged schools whereas 29% of non-funded schools fall into the same quartile. Thirty four percent (34%) of BaB funded schools fall into the 4th quartile of economically disadvantaged schools compared to 23% of non funded schools that fall into the same quartile.

Table 3. Percent of Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	Number of Non-BaB Schools	Number of BaB Schools	Percent of Non-BaB Schools	Percent of BaB Schools
1	436	12	29	4
2	380	64	25	24
3	341	100	23	37
4	346	91	23	34

When compared to schools in the same economically disadvantage quartile, students at BaB funded schools had similar Standards of Learning (SOL) pass rates in both reading (Table 4) and math (Table 5). There was no statistically significant relationship between BaB funding and SOL pass rates in reading or math across all economically disadvantaged quartile.

Table 4. SOL Reading Pass Rates for Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	SOL Reading Pass Rate Non-BaB schools	SOL Reading Pass Rate BaB Schools
1	Elementary	84	--
	Middle	84	79
	High	92	86
2	Elementary	74	--
	Middle	72	72
	High	85	83
3	Elementary	68	81
	Middle	68	71
	High	84	84
4	Elementary	60	52
	Middle	69	57
	High	75	76

Table 5. SOL Math Pass Rates for Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	SOL Math Pass Rate Non-BaB Schools	SOL Math Pass Rate BaB Schools
1	Elementary	85	--
	Middle	82	75
	High	86	89
2	Elementary	76	--
	Middle	70	67
	High	80	81
3	Elementary	71	81
	Middle	65	67
	High	80	77
4	Elementary	62	55
	Middle	66	51
	High	75	71

BaB funded schools also had similar Chronic Absenteeism rates when compared to unfunded schools in the same economically disadvantaged quartiles (Table 6). Additionally, there is not a statistically significant relationship between BaB funding and the number of discipline events per 100 students, percent of students involved in a discipline event or percent of students suspended (Table 7).

Table 6. Chronic Absenteeism Rates for Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	Chronic Absenteeism Rates Non-BaB schools	Chronic Absenteeism Rates BaB Schools
1	Elementary	6.55%	
	Middle	9.00%	10.10%
	High	13.77%	16.38%
2	Elementary	9.68%	
	Middle	13.29%	13.23%
	High	18.46%	19.53%
3	Elementary	11.42%	10.14%
	Middle	15.27%	15.24%
	High	19.37%	20.33%
4	Elementary	15.21%	11.83%
	Middle	15.46%	18.95%
	High	25.32%	25.71%

Table 7. Student Discipline Rates for Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	Events per 100 Students		% of Students w/ an Event		% of Students w/ Suspension	
		Non-BaB schools	BaB Schools	Non-BaB schools	BaB Schools	Non-BaB schools	BaB Schools
1	Elementary	13.77		4.21		1.26	
	Middle	32.16	58.17	15.05	17.07	6.50	8.55
	High	43.2	61.12	11.82	22.01	5.53	3.75
2	Elementary	21.83		6.75		3.01	
	Middle	54.05	77.03	17.71	22.81	11.45	14.23
	High	69.24	95.07	8.65	25.67	9.95	11.12
3	Elementary	26.91		8.87	10.18	3.25	4.47
	Middle	77.25	67.33	19.25	21.01	11.97	12.26
	High	71.45	62.91	22.64	19.82	11.75	13.10
4	Elementary	37.91	21.18	9.87	10.51	6.75	3.87
	Middle	70.51	82.33	28.22	30.40	15.40	17.52
	High	72.21	73.14	27.57	19.50	12.45	13.27

Schools receiving Breakfast After the Bell funding are a subset of a larger group of schools offering alternative breakfast models. This larger group includes more than 85.5% of all regular public schools (1,522 out of 1,771) that provided at least one alternative breakfast model in school year 2025-2026. Comparison of BaB and non-BaB funded schools lacks a true control group as many unfunded schools provide alternative breakfast programs. To address this, a comparative analysis was conducted on all regular public schools providing only traditional breakfast models and those schools providing at least one alternative breakfast model.

Schools offering only traditional breakfast models represent a lower proportion of economically disadvantaged students compared to schools providing alternative breakfast models (Table 8). More than half (55%) of schools offering traditional breakfast models only fall into the lowest quartile of economically disadvantaged students whereas 20% of schools offering alternative breakfast models fall into the same quartile. Only 9% of schools offering traditional breakfast models only fall into the higher quartile of economically disadvantaged students and 27% of alternative breakfast model schools fall into the same quartile.

Table 8. Percent of Non-BaB Schools and BaB Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	Number of Traditional Breakfast Only Schools	Number of Alternative Breakfast Schools	Percent of Traditional Breakfast Only Schools	Percent of Alternative Breakfast Schools
1	136	312	55	20
2	54	390	22	26
3	36	406	14	27
4	23	414	9	27

Students at schools providing alternative breakfast models and those attending schools that solely provide traditional breakfast had similar SOL pass rates on both reading (Table 9) and math SOL tests (Table 10). There was no statistically significant relationship between traditional breakfast and alternative breakfast models and SOL pass rates in reading and math.

Table 9. SOL Reading Pass Rates for Traditional Breakfast Schools and Alternative Breakfast Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	SOL Reading Pass Rate Traditional Breakfast Only Schools	SOL Reading Pass Rate Alternative Breakfast Schools
1	Elementary	86	82
	Middle	89	82
	High	90	92
2	Elementary	76	74
	Middle	76	72
	High	89	84
3	Elementary	69	68
	Middle	66	70
	High	83	84
4	Elementary	68	60
	Middle	72	61
	High	76	76

Table 10. SOL Math Pass Rates for Traditional Breakfast Schools and Alternative Breakfast Schools by Economic Disadvantaged Quartile and School Type

Economic Disadvantaged Quartile	School Type	SOL Math Pass Rate Traditional Breakfast Only Schools	SOL Math Pass Rate Alternative Breakfast Schools
1	Elementary	88	84
	Middle	88	80
	High	89	85
2	Elementary	78	76
	Middle	73	68
	High	84	80
3	Elementary	72	71
	Middle	62	66
	High	79	79
4	Elementary	72	61
	Middle	66	57
	High	77	72

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Item 125 29 c.1-3, Chapter 1, 2026 Acts of Assembly:

c.1) Out of this appropriation, $1,074,000 the first year and $1,074,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to fund an After-the-Bell Model breakfast program available on a voluntary basis to elementary, middle, and high schools where student eligibility for free or reduced lunch exceeds 45.0 percent for the participating eligible school, and to provide additional reimbursement for eligible meals served in the current traditional school breakfast program at all grade levels in any participating school. The Department of Education is directed to ensure that only eligible schools receive reimbursement funding for participating in the After-the-Bell school breakfast model. The schools participating in the program shall evaluate the educational impact of the models implemented that provide school breakfasts to students after the first bell of the school day, based on the guidelines developed by the Department of Education and submit the required report to the Department of Education no later than August 31 each year.

2) The Department of Education shall communicate, through Superintendent's Memo, to school divisions the types of breakfast serving models and the criteria that will meet the requirements for this State reimbursement, which may include, but are not limited to, breakfast in the classroom, grab and go breakfast, or a breakfast after first period. School divisions may determine the breakfast serving model that best applies to their students, so long as it occurs after the instructional day has begun. The Department of Education shall monthly transfer to each school division a reimbursement rate of $0.05 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in elementary schools and a reimbursement rate of $0.10 per breakfast meal that meets either of the established criteria in middle or high schools.

3) No later than July 1 each year, the Department of Education shall provide for a breakfast program application process for school divisions with eligible schools, including guidelines regarding specified required data to be compiled from the prior school year or years and for the upcoming school year program. The number of approved applications shall be based on the estimated number of sites that can be accommodated within the approved funding level. The Department of Education shall set criteria for establishing priority should the number of applications from eligible schools exceed the approved funding level. The reporting requirements must include chronic absenteeism rates, student attendance and tardy arrivals, office discipline referrals, student achievement measures, teachers' and administrators' responses to the impact of the program on student hunger, student attentiveness, and overall classroom learning environment before and after implementation, and the financial impact on the division's school food program. Funded schools that do not provide data by August 31 are subject to exclusion from funding in the following year. The Department of Education shall collect and compile the results of the breakfast program and shall submit the report to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees no later than November 1 following each school year.