# SNP Memo #2022-2023-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: September 14, 2023

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: #AttendanceMattersVA Campaign

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has launched the **#AttendanceMattersVA** campaign to address the school absenteeism in Virginia. One of the strategies the VDOE is promoting to combat absenteeism is the importance of school breakfast- including all the strategies to encourage participation such as Breakfast After the Bell, breakfast in the classroom, second chance breakfast and universal free breakfast.

We encourage schools to share photos, quotes, and testimonials from your school breakfast programs on social media using the hashtag #AttendanceMattersVA.

### Attendance and School Breakfast Programs

When children fail to show up regularly for school, they fail to develop good attendance habits that are important not only for their education but as foundational for their adult lives. Chronic absenteeism causes children to miss out on important academic lessons and social experiences. In fact, chronic absenteeism in pre-k and kindergarten can lead to lower test scores and poor attendance in later grades.

Participation in the School Breakfast Program is one strategy for combating chronic absenteeism. Research shows that school breakfast increases student engagement and attendance, academic achievement, and overall positive health outcomes. Unfortunately, many barriers, such as late transportation, inconvenient meal service locations, and social stigma, prevent students from participating in school breakfast. Breakfast after the Bell (BaB) is one strategy to help overcome these barriers by providing breakfast after the school day begins, leveling the field for by providing breakfast access to all students.

In Virginia, additional funding is available each year, for schools that apply and qualify for Breakfast After the Bell as well as Breakfast Incentive Funding for schools that increase breakfast participation above the base year.

### Promoting Your School Breakfast Programs

Marketing is an essential component to increasing school breakfast participation. The [No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices](https://www.bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/) offers helpful resources for promoting and enhancing your school breakfast programs. The [VDOE-SNP School Breakfast Program website](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/programs-promotions-and-initiatives/school-breakfast-program) offers additional school breakfast resources. SFAs are encouraged to promote their school breakfast programs by sharing any and all photos, quotes, testimonials, etc. related to their school breakfast and programs on social media using the hashtag **#AttendanceMattersVA**. SFAs are also encouraged to share any breakfast-related events via the [Virginia School Nutrition Events form](https://virginiadoe.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aaZaYvBzmr78tJc) located on the [VDOE-SNP homepage](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition).

### For more information

For questions or for more information about school breakfast programs or the #AttendanceMattersVA campaign, please contact your [SNP regional specialist](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/regional-school-nutrition-program-specialists).

SCC/KNS/cc