



HUNGER IN OUR SCHOOLS

2015

Every day, teachers, principals and staff in schools across the country see students who can't succeed because of hunger.

No Kid Hungry set out to learn more, through a national survey of educators and a series of focus groups. Our research confirms that child hunger is an education issue, one that threatens not only our kids, but our future.



3 out of 4 public school teachers say students regularly come to school hungry.



Of those educators who see hunger regularly, **81%** say it happens at least once a week.

84% of principals say that students are coming to school hungry because they don't get enough to eat at home, and 6 in 10 (59%) educators say "a lot or most" children in their school rely on school meals as their **primary source of nutrition**.

You start wondering what's happening at home. It's hard not to judge. Then you meet the parents and you learn that there's more to the story.

TONY KELLAM

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Hunger Hurts Kids

Educators who regularly see children come to school hungry describe a **host of problems**:

 **Inability to concentrate**
88%

 **Lack of energy or motivation**
87%

 **Poor academic performance**
84%

 **Tiredness**
82%

 **Behavioral problems**
65%

 **Students feeling sick**
53%

93% of educators are concerned about the **long-term effects** hunger could have on children's education.

But hunger doesn't just affect kids. Over the long term, as students struggle with hunger in classrooms across the country, **it affects us all**.

Students that are hungry aren't able to focus on their schoolwork or interact in a positive way with their teachers and classmates, and that has dire implications for their future. They lose out on the chance to become engaged, productive citizens and we lose out on the talents of hundreds of thousands of future scientists, artists and innovators.

Every Kid Needs Breakfast

We've all heard the saying: breakfast is the most important meal of the day. **91% of educators agree** that breakfast is very or extremely important to academic achievement.

Teachers see the benefits of breakfast:

+ **Helps students concentrate throughout the day**
93%

+ **Better academic performance**
87%

+ **Healthier students**
76%

+ **Prevents headaches and stomachaches**
74%

+ **Better behaved students**
68%

It affects our entire country when we're producing a group of children that are reading below the grade level, that will not be able to function in society and in the job market. I think it affects us all.

AUDREY HARRIS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

So if 94% of public schools currently offer breakfast, why do teachers say the problem of hunger has increased?

How do breakfast programs fail our kids?

The problem is the way breakfast is served at most schools. Participation in school breakfast programs is low across the country for a number of reasons:



Students are Embarrassed

Educators say students are embarrassed to be singled out as the “poor kids” eating alone in the cafeteria or filing through separate lines. As a result, many children skip breakfast, no matter how badly they may need it.

“Most kids know that the children going to the cafeteria in the morning are the ones getting free breakfast. There are some kids who make jokes, who say mean things.”

STACY GRAY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



It's Served Too Early

Educators note that the timing of breakfast programs can be a barrier for some students.

“We need to get them to school on time so they can get breakfast. For some of them, that’s the only time they get breakfast.”

DIANE HALL
BUS DRIVER



Students Can't Make it to School Early

Because of home issues out of their control, some students can’t make it to school on time, let alone arrive early enough for breakfast.

“One morning he came in late, and was grabbing at his stomach. He couldn’t concentrate. Because he hadn’t eaten, there was nothing at home. And he had to walk to school alone. It’s not the child’s fault.”

ALEX PEREZ
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

There is a Solution That Works

Some schools have figured out better ways to feed kids. One way is breakfast in the classroom, a model that moves breakfast out of the cafeteria, making it a part of the regular school day for all students.

75% of educators with breakfast in the classroom say that the program has been positive for students, because:



Students have been fed



Students are energized and ready



No one is singled out

More importantly, it works.

73% of educators saw an improvement in alertness during morning lessons.

48%

saw a decrease in disciplinary problems.

53%

saw an improvement in attendance.

Other Effective Solutions

Serving breakfast in the classroom isn’t the only way to make it part of the school day. Some schools have seen great success with “Grab n’ Go” carts, an approach that works especially well with high school students, as well as “second chance breakfast” which is served later in the morning, and other creative approaches to making sure kids are fed.



New approaches to school breakfasts are working.

Since the start of the 2014 school year, 302,207 more children are getting the healthy breakfast they need at school as compared to last year, according to numbers released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Childhood hunger is a crisis, a problem that threatens our kids' health and our nation's future. An entire generation of American kids is being left behind and condemned to a life of lesser opportunities and missed chances.

But this is a problem we know how to solve.

A straightforward, proven fix is right in front of us: breakfast as part of the school day for every kid who needs it.

Find out more about how breakfast can change lives for kids at NoKidHungry.org/Breakfast

We have enough money and resources to take care of everyone, to provide for these children who are hungry. They can and should be fed. Hunger is something that can be wiped out.

DEBORAH HALL
SPECIAL ED TEACHER

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In partnership with No Kid Hungry, Salter Mitchell conducted qualitative and quantitative phases of research meant to explore the issue of children coming to school hungry. The quantitative phase consisted of a 20 minute online survey among teachers (n=605), principals (n=202) and support staff (n=200) who work with students between kindergarten and eighth grade. Included in the survey was an over-sample of educators whose schools offer breakfast in the classroom. The survey was fielded from January 9-22, 2015. The margin of error for the total sample size included (n=1,007) is 3.1% at a 95% confidence level. This means that if the study was repeated using the same parameters, 19 times out of 20 (or 95% of the time) we would expect to get a result within +/- 3.1% of the results we have here. Online samples, if recruited, managed and selected correctly, can effectively reflect a known universe. However, no online sample is projectable according to strict sampling theory which states that in order for a sample to be projectable to a population it must be a random sample of that population; that is, one in which all members of the population have a known and non-zero probability of selection.

The qualitative phase consisted of six small 90-minute focus groups made up of teachers (n=13), principals (n=3) and support staff (n=5) who work with students between kindergarten and eighth grade. The groups were conducted in the Long Beach neighborhood of Los Angeles, CA on January 21 and 22, 2015 and in the city of Silver Spring, MD outside of Washington, DC on January 27 and 28, 2015. Participants were recruited from the nearby school districts. Care was taken to recruit a mix of demographics for the groups. Only recruits who rated "children coming to school hungry" as a six or higher on a 10 point scale of seriousness were invited to participate.



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