

Reduce hunger, improve child health and school success

One-third of Washington households with children had low or very low food security and about half of all Washington households with children relied on food assistance in 2020-2021 ([UW WSU, 2021](#)). Our state has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring all children have access to healthy food by eliminating co-pays for low-income students, funding grants for school kitchen equipment, and expanding use of the Community Eligibility Provision, which allows certain high-poverty schools to provide free meals to all of their students. Yet children of color still experience disproportionately high rates of hunger and too many families continue to struggle with food insecurity.

The evidence is clear that hunger impedes learning. When we address hunger, the result is kids who are healthier, perform better in school, and demonstrate better behavior and mental health.

Solution

Provide funding to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide free school meals to all children and teens in Washington State.



Children who eat school meals consume a healthier diet overall than those who do not. ([CDC](#))



Eating breakfast at school is associated with better attendance and better test scores. ([No Kid Hungry, CDC](#))



Hungry children are more likely to have to repeat a grade, exhibit behavioral problems in the classroom, and suffer from anxiety and depression. ([CDC](#))



Providing free school meals for all children is a proven way to eliminate barriers and stigma for children to get the food they need for healthy growth and development. ([Hopkins](#))



The American Academy of Pediatrics supports healthy school meals for all students, regardless of income eligibility, to ensure no children go hungry and to eliminate both the cost barrier to struggling families who do not currently qualify, and the stigma associated with free meals. ([Source](#))

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