

Reduce hunger, improve child health, and school success

In 2022-2023, one-third of Washington households with children had low or very low food security, and nearly three-fourths of families experiencing food insecurity relied on food assistance ([UW WSU, 2023](#)). Our state has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring all children have access to healthy food by providing free school meals for all students in all K-5 and K-8 buildings where at least 30% of the student population are receiving free and reduced lunch, yet too many families continue to struggle with food insecurity with children of color experiencing disproportionately high rates of hunger. 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 school-aged children and teens (K-12) 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](#))