

Hunger in Our Schools

HOW KIDS IN AMERICA ARE GOING HUNGRY
AND WHAT WE CAN DO

As the divide between the haves and the have-nots grows wider in America, too many children on the wrong side of the line are going without the food they need.

This report shows the depth of the crisis.
But we also know there is a solution.



Are Kids Really Going Hungry?

PARENTS, CHILDREN AND TEACHERS SAY YES

Kids aren't getting enough to eat.

59%

of parents admit that, in the last year, **the food they bought didn't last and they didn't have money to buy more.**

23%

of low-income parents have been **forced to cut the size of their children's meals** because of lack of money.

Almost half (48%) say they **can't afford enough food** each month to meet their family's needs.

34%

of parents say they **struggle to provide nutritious/ balanced meals** because they can't afford it.

For too many kids, the stress of not having enough to eat is real and constant.

62%

of low-income parents **worry about food for their children running out before they have money to buy more.** 35% of kids have the same fear.

55% of children know their parents are worried about being able to afford enough food for the entire family.

Children understand the toll that hunger can take on their lives.

42%

of kids from low-income families **feel sadness about not having enough to eat.** Almost the same amount (41%) feel anger. **27% of children from low-income families believe hunger will have a negative impact on their future.**

"I feel like **real hungry** is different. It's like when your stomach growls. It's like when your stomach is almost in pain for me. **That's what real hungry is.**"

WHAT DOES "GOING HUNGRY" MEAN, EXACTLY?

In the United States today, facing hunger can mean different things. Maybe there is no food in the house and no money to buy any. Maybe there's food, but not enough to last through the end of the month, so parents skip meals, or kids get smaller portions than they need.

Whatever their situation, kids who don't have reliable access to three healthy meals a day are much more likely to face unhealthy, unsuccessful, uncertain futures.

Growing Up Poor in America

FOR TOO MANY FAMILIES, HUNGER IS ONE UNEXPECTED BILL AWAY

“I’ve spent nights sometimes where I can’t sleep, because I’m trying to figure out **if I have enough to pay bills and get groceries to feed my kids.**”

- CANDICE FIELD



1 in 6 kids in America is facing hunger.

That’s 13 million children. And though people sometimes think of hunger as something that affects only children in dense urban neighborhoods or isolated rural towns, the truth is that **hunger affects children in every community**, including affluent suburbs.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE POOR IN AMERICA?

Each year, the U.S. Census Bureau defines the federal poverty line, a set of income thresholds based on the number of people in a family. In 2015, the federal poverty line for a family of four was \$24,250, which is less than half the median American income of \$55,775.



Many Americans are one minor crisis away from disaster.

64% of low-income parents say it would be difficult to feed their children if they encountered an unexpected expense, like a \$1,500 car repair or medical bill.



Most families that need help are working.

92% of families we surveyed who rely on food programs are working families – at least one adult in the house works full-time, part-time or multiple jobs.

Hungry Kids Can't Learn

TEACHERS SAY HUNGRY CHILDREN'S FUTURES ARE IMPERILED

Kids are coming to school hungry.

Not every kid starts the day with a healthy breakfast.

59%

of children from low-income families say they **have come to school hungry.**

Hungry kids can't focus in school.

46%

of children from low-income families say **hunger hurts their performance in school.** 12% say that sometimes at night they're **too distracted by hunger to do their homework.**

Teachers see hunger in their classrooms.



3 out of 4

educators see students who **regularly come to school hungry** because they are not getting enough to eat at home.

46% of these see hungry students **arrive nearly every day.**

92%

of teachers are concerned about how hunger **impacts their students' ability to succeed.**

They recognize the toll it takes.

When their students don't get enough to eat:

80%

of teachers see them **lose the ability to concentrate.**

76%

see **poor academic performance.**

62%

see **behavioral and discipline problems.**

47%

see **sicker and less healthy students.**

They do what they can.



\$300

is the amount of their own money that most **teachers spend each year buying food for students.** (about \$35 a month during the school year).

59%

of teachers **regularly buy food for students** who are not getting enough to eat at home.

"My focus is different when I'm hungry. Of course I'm gonna be thinking about food. I'm gonna be thinking about which one of my classmates got food, I'm gonna be thinking about which one of them might share their food."

We Can Feed Hungry Kids in America

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS ARE THE ANSWER

No child should go hungry in a nation with plenty of food. The good news? There is a solution. **Effective programs already exist that can reach every school-aged child.**

They're funded by the federal government and run through the schools in your neighborhood. These programs are proven to work. And when we bring them to every school across the country, children will be healthier and happier.

OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THE POWERFUL EFFECTS THAT SCHOOL MEALS CAN HAVE ON KIDS FACING HUNGER:

77% of kids say school meals help them feel better, reducing headaches and upset stomachs.

74% of kids say school meals help them pay attention and behave in the classroom.

71% of kids say school meals help their grades.

NOTE: These three numbers include children who either agreed with the statement or felt neutral / did not disagree.



When you make breakfast part of the regular school day – served to kids in class or from “grab-and-go” kiosks – you can reach a LOT more kids. Studies show that children from low-income families who eat school breakfast are significantly more likely to do well on tests and miss less school.



School lunch is our oldest and most effective school meals program; more than half of low-income parents (52%) say their child relies on free or reduced-price school lunch every day.



Not every child needs a meal before they go home. But many do – 83% of teachers worry that their students may not have enough to eat at home. For those kids, an afternoon meals program at school makes a huge difference.



Lots of kids depend on school meals – meals that disappear during the summer. Today, just one out of seven children eligible for free summer meals are getting them. But more and more schools and community organizations are opening their doors in the summer to provide free breakfast and lunch to all who need it.

About This Report

This research from No Kid Hungry helps us better understand childhood hunger in the United States. Though many studies track larger trends, this research looks directly at how children and their parents experience hunger, to help us see what kids are facing. The more we can understand what children and their parents are going through, the more we're able to identify and develop programs to help them.

Hunger in Our Schools is an ongoing research project; No Kid Hungry has been surveying educators to learn more about childhood hunger since 2009.

The data and stories in this report come from survey research conducted by SalterMitchell in partnership with No Kid Hungry. More detailed notes on the methodology appear at the end of this report.

Since the first report in 2009, the Hunger in Our Schools research series has been sponsored by C&S Wholesale Grocers Inc. as part of their ongoing commitment to feeding every child in America.

Methodology

Data from kids and parents came from a 20-minute online dyad survey with N=500 low-income parents at or below 185% of the federal poverty level and their children, aged 13-18, who attend public school in the United States. Margin of error was $\pm 4.4\%$. (If more than one eligible child was in the household one was selected at random.) The data was weighted and scaled to ensure a representative balance according to available government benchmarks for this population. These results were supplemented with a series of six (6) focus groups with parents and children in communities across Maryland.

Data from educators came from a 10-minute online survey of N=325 teachers (K-12), administrators and school support staff in the United States. The margin of error was $\pm 5.4\%$. Additionally, an oversample was conducted in the state of Florida in Miami-Dade, Broward and Orange Counties (N=219). The total margin of error including the oversample was $\pm 4.2\%$. Only national data excluding the oversample is reported here.

All research was conducted in the spring of 2017.



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