



HUNGER IN OUR SCHOOLS

SHARE OUR STRENGTH'S
TEACHERS REPORT 2012



Hungry kids can't learn.

According to a new survey of public school teachers released by Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, childhood hunger remains a serious obstacle to learning.

According to the survey, a majority of teachers (56%) say "a lot" or "most" of their students rely on school meals as their primary source of nutrition, so it's clearer than ever that students need better access to food and nutrition programs. Connecting kids to programs like school breakfast helps ensure they get the healthy food they need to learn and grow.

THE PROBLEM
3 in 5
K-8 public school teachers say students regularly come to school hungry.

CHILDHOOD HUNGER IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM



Teachers are first-hand witnesses to the toll hunger takes on students. "Hunger In Our Schools: Share Our Strength's Teachers Report 2012," a survey of more than 1,000 K-8 public school teachers nationwide, was commissioned by the No Kid Hungry campaign with support from C&S Wholesale Grocers. The survey finds that three out of five public school teachers (62%) say they have children in their classrooms who regularly come to school hungry because they're not getting enough to eat at home. Four out of five of those

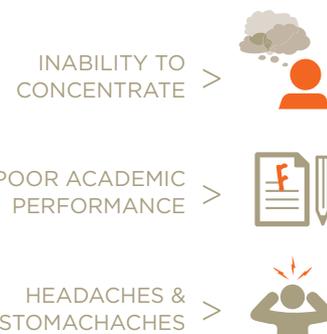
teachers (80%) say these children come to school hungry at least once a week. And a majority of teachers (56%) who see hunger as a problem believe the problem is growing.

"I have had students who have come to school with lunch the previous day having been their last meal," one elementary teacher in the Northeast told researchers. Another teacher from the Midwest said, "The saddest are the children who cry when we get out early for a snow day because they won't get lunch."

THE CONSEQUENCES OF HUNGER

Overwhelmingly, teachers say students have trouble learning when they're focused on their empty stomachs. Hungry students, they say, struggle with poor academic performance, behavior problems and health issues. Teachers cite lethargy, headaches, stomachaches and difficulty concentrating as direct consequences of hunger.

"Kids lack the ability to ignore those hunger pains," said a teacher from the Western U.S. "They're concentrating on how soon until lunch rather than on learning to read."



TEACHERS TAKE ACTION

As first-hand responders to hunger in our schools, teachers are active in trying to ensure kids are fed, and three out of four teachers (77%) say addressing childhood hunger must be a national priority.

Teachers commonly help families enroll in free or reduced-price school meal programs (71% of the time) or refer families to resources in the school (54% of the time).

Many also spend money out of their own pockets to buy food for students who haven't had enough to eat.

More than half of teachers (53%) say they purchase food for hungry kids in their classrooms. One in ten of these teachers buys food every week. Teachers who buy food for hungry kids in their classrooms spend an average of \$26 a month.



THE AMOUNT SPENT, ON AVERAGE, ON FOOD FOR THEIR CLASSROOM BY 78% OF THE TEACHERS WHO SEE HUNGER.

"OVER MY 20-PLUS YEARS OF TEACHING," SAID ONE TEACHER FROM MARYLAND, "I AM SEEING MORE HUNGRY KIDS THAN EVER BEFORE AND I AM SPENDING MORE AND MORE TO TRY TO PUT A BAND-AID ON THE PROBLEM."

TEACHERS SAY: BREAKFAST WORKS

Teachers agree breakfast plays an especially critical role in ensuring kids get the healthy food they need to succeed each day. In fact, nine out of ten teachers say breakfast is very important for academic achievement. Teachers credit breakfast with increased concentration (95%), better academic performance (89%) and better behavior in the classroom (73%). Health is also a major factor, with four out of five teachers telling researchers breakfast prevents headaches and stomachaches. Teachers also say that students who've eaten breakfast are less likely to be tardy or absent (56%).



MISSING OUT ON BREAKFAST

Although breakfast is critical to helping children learn and thrive, today too many eligible children in America are missing out. The national School Breakfast Program offers kids a nutritious free or reduced-price breakfast at school so they can start their day ready to learn, **but of the 20 million low-income kids in the U.S. who ate a free or reduced-price school lunch in 2011, only 9.7 million also ate breakfast at school.**

Kids miss out on school breakfast for a variety of reasons. Teachers cite timing and stigma as two barriers to participation in the School Breakfast Program. Three out of four teachers say some kids miss out on meals because of they get to school too late to eat. Others are embarrassed and don't want to be singled out as "the poor kids" eating in the cafeteria (33%). Teachers say that sometimes the problem simply is that parents aren't aware the program exists (35%).

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

The good news is that healthy breakfasts are available each day in most schools and there are many creative, low-cost ways for schools to ensure more kids get the food they need. In an open-ended question, teachers offered a variety of actions schools could take to address student hunger; their number one response was "provide breakfast." These teachers had many ideas about ways to connect more kids to school breakfast. The most popular solution was to increase communication with parents about the school meals that are available (75%). Other ideas include reducing the red tape that limits participation in the School Breakfast Program (61%) and decreasing stigma by making free breakfast available to all students, not just those from families with low incomes (58%).

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign works to increase participation in School Breakfast Programs nationwide by breaking down barriers and stigma. No Kid Hungry promotes innovative breakfast models like Breakfast in the Classroom (healthy breakfast items available to all students in their classrooms) and Grab N' Go breakfasts (portable, easy-to-eat items students pick up to eat in class or on the way to class). "Breakfast Challenges" that provide rewards to schools that increase school breakfast participation and local

grants that help school implement new serving models are also very effective ways to increase participation. These programs have already proven successful across the nation in increasing the number of kids who eat breakfast at school.

Like teachers, No Kid Hungry believes that we have the power to address hunger in our schools. By improving access, increasing participation and eliminating stigma, together we can help ensure that all children get the healthy food they need every day.

"[SERVING BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM MEANS] ALMOST EVERY STUDENT EATS BREAKFAST EVERY DAY... IT'S A GREAT HELP TO THE STUDENTS BECAUSE THEY'RE MORE ENERGETIC AND READY TO GO IN THE MORNING."

- COLORADO, 6-8 GRADE TEACHER

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