Hunger and Education

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How does child hunger impact learning?

School administrator’s primary focus is educating students. So keep that in mind when advocating for children.

How can you talk about your subject in terms of enhancing education?

Summer programs can call attention to how fed children will not lose knowledge gains that were made during school year. Summer educational programs are supported by food.

What happens when students are too hungry to learn? they misbehave.

Children that misbehave in school/class should be asked about their hunger.

Remember: Focus on improving **learning** **environments** and **feeding the mind.**

A snowball effect of childhood hunger is decreased graduation rates.

American Academy of Pediatrics recommends for all pediatricians to do a hunger screening at every well child checkup. The AAP recognizes the extensive impact of child hunger.

Food Insecurity: the lack of consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food

<<There is a hidden food stress slide that is impactful if it can be inserted here.>>

Ms. Hayes outlined the four dimensions of food insecurity and how they create food stress.

Food Stress is the stress that comes with the varying levels of food insecurity.

A child experiences food stress when adults go hungry so the child can eat.

“Hangry” is a chronic state in food stress.

“Marginal Food Security” is the concern that food will run out before the family is

able to afford more. This comes when food is abundant due to temp jobs or summer

gardens, but scare in winter. This also comes with loss of job.

Food Provides Fuel

Ms. Hayes provided a slide with pictures from MRIs demonstrating the effects of hunger on the brain. When a person is hungry, the brain is actively focused on the hunger and unable to focus on other things- like learning!

When a person is fed, the brain is calm and in working mode. The pictures representing this person indicate the brain is ready to receive instruction and new information.

Side Note: The part of the brain that is first affected by hunger is the part of the

brain that is needed to do math.

Breakfast in the Classroom

Many times people may be opposed to breakfast in the classroom because of the mess or stickiness or potential for being distracting. Ms. Hayes responds that children are able to be taught anything! They just need to know the process and expectations. Teach the children the expectation of cleanliness- how to clean up their mess, where to find wipes to clean their space, etc. Now you have taught a valuable skill of cleaning up after yourself *and* your students are focused and ready to learn!

Many times the nurse is the first person in the school to see hunger in a student because the students go to the nurse for tummy aches or headaches. Many nurses address this by keeping snacks in their office for these students, but by offering healthy breakfast we are able to offer a more nutritionally rich solution.

Remember: Administrators are focused on tardiness, absences, test scores, and graduation. If you speak with administrators regarding child hunger keep your message centered on how these will be improved by having children fed.

Food Quality

We have a nation of children that are overfed and undernourished. Even children that have food security at home can still be undernourished.

Nutrients of concern: vitamin A, vitamin C, **vitamin D**, vitamin E, folate, Magnesium, **Potassium**, **Calcium**, **fiber**, **Iron** for teen girls and young women. Bolded nutrients are of an immediate concern.

Addressing this undernourishment is a driving force for ensuring meals offered during breakfast and lunch are nutrient dense.

“It’s only nutrition when they eat or drink it!”

PE teachers and coaches are great advocates for school nutrition because PE teachers want their students to participate and coaches want to win! Sometimes the simple act of coach encouraging a student to eat will be enough for the student to get in the breakfast line.

Students need enough time to eat at school.

Even students in food secure households may not eat breakfast and will be hungry.

School meals are the most effective, least expensive way to ensure academic success. Just like you need to put the right fuel in your car, we need to adequately fuel our brains. Breakfast for learning in the morning and lunch for learning in the afternoon.