



# Hungry Kids Can't Learn:

School Nutrition and the Definition of Basic  
Education in Washington

# “Meals for Kids” Coalition:



# 1946: Congress Creates the National School Lunch Program

“The national school lunch bill provides basic, comprehensive legislation for aid, in general, to the States in the operation of school lunch programs as permanent and integral parts of their school systems....”



# State Investment and Policy in Washington:

- 1989: School breakfast mandate for high need schools
- 1993: Meals for Kids investment in start-up and provision of breakfast
- 2004: Mandate for school lunch in most elementary schools
- 2006: WA becomes the first state to eliminate the “co-pay” for reduced-price breakfasts
- 2007: This co-pay is also eliminated for school lunch in Kindergarten through third grades



# Food for Thought:

- 38% of Washington students live in families that qualify for free or reduced-price school meals – about 388,000 children.
- During the 2006-07 school year, nutrition programs in Washington schools served a total of 42 million lunches and 12 million breakfasts.



# What happens to hungry kids?

- Health

- Poorer overall health status and compromised ability to resist illness
- Greater incidences of hospitalization

- Behavior

- Higher levels of aggression, hyperactivity and anxiety
- Increased difficulty in getting along with other children



# What happens to hungry kids?

- Learning

- Impaired cognitive functioning and diminished capacity to learn
- Lower test scores and poorer overall school achievement

Fortunately, we know how to help hungry kids – give them nutritious food!



# Benefits of School Meals to Student Wellness

- Improved math scores, vocabulary skills and memory
- Higher performance on standardized tests
- Reduced behavior problems and visits to the school nurse
- Reduced tardiness and absenteeism, and
- A better overall diet, including increased consumption of fruits and vegetables



# Your Opportunity

- Nutrition programs are an essential building block for educational success.
- However, unlike other support services in our educational system, **school meals** are not considered part of “basic education.”
- **YOU** can change that and acknowledge that quality school meal programs help children arrive in the classroom ready to learn.



# All Low-Income Students Need Free School Meals

- We are asking that the 2009 Legislature eliminate the lunch co-pay for Pre-K and 4-12 grade reduced price students.
- This investment of \$9.3 million for the biennium would provide an additional 2.16 million meals, and would increase Federal reimbursement to school districts by \$4.47M.
- Kids don't stop needing a nutritious lunch when they graduate to 4<sup>th</sup> grade: we need to finish the job in 2009.



# Thank you

- For the opportunity to request that school nutrition join other key educational supports within the definition of basic education.



**W**ASHINGTON  
**S**CHOOL  
**N**UTRITION  
**A**SSOCIATION

*Making the right food choices, together.*

