

# RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH: IS 20 MINUTES ENOUGH?

How adequate time to eat ties to academic success



## Background

- Participation in the National School Lunch Program is associated with long-term educational attainment (5)
- 1 in 6 children are living in food insecure households (4)
- In FY 2018, schools served over 4.8 billion lunches to children nationwide (1)
- About one-half of school districts nationwide do not require or recommend that schools provide students with at least 20 minutes to eat lunch once they receive their meal (2)
- Providing more time for lunch is associated with increased consumption of food and key nutrients (3)

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### State Legislators:

- **Establish a 30 minute school lunch period to allow students 20 minutes to eat (2)**
- **Recommend scheduling recess before lunch (8)**

### Schools:

- **Train school nutrition staff so meal service and payment are efficient (2)**
- **Schedule 30-minute lunch periods to ensure 20 minutes of seat time (3)**
- **Develop school wellness policies to promote a comfortable eating environment (2)**

Studies show that not eating enough lunch impacts student performance (10, 11):

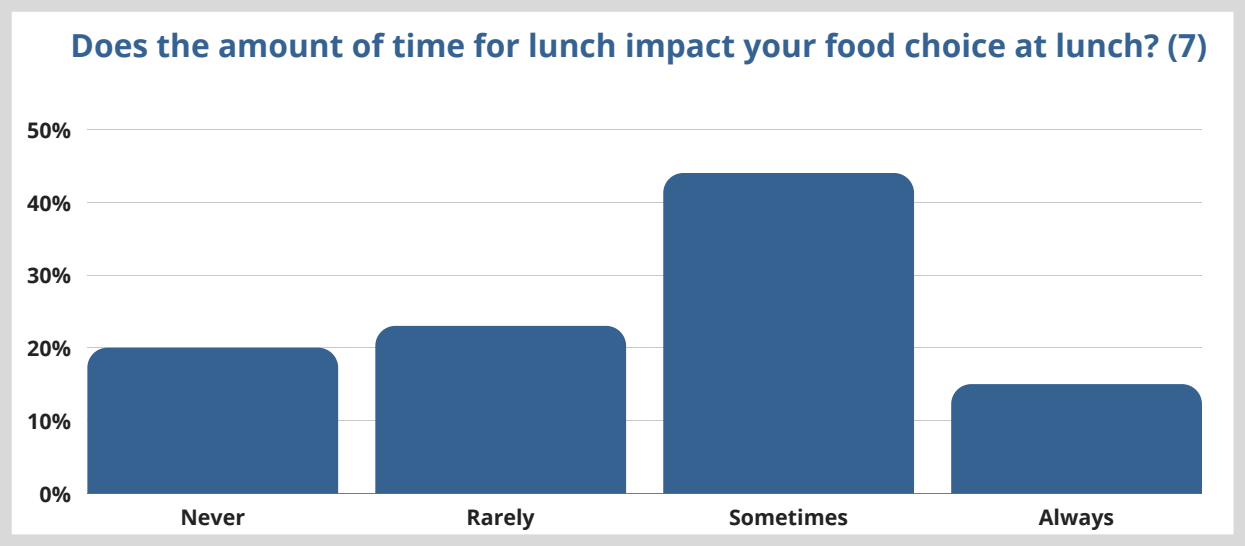
**76%** Teachers see poor performance when the children don't eat enough.

**46%** Children say hunger hurts performance in school.



Free meals at school increases students performance in math and language arts.

When students have at least 25 minutes for lunch they consume more of their meal and choose healthier options (7, 9).



Students consume 67% more food, including fruits and vegetables, when recess is schedule before lunch. (8)

**CAPTURING JOY**

*The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 increased student access to more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. It is imperative that students have adequate time to eat these nutrient dense foods.*



# Not Enough Time.....

"Dante, a second grader, and Gabriel, a kindergartner, qualify for free lunch at school. But after they walk to the lunchroom, wash their hands, and stand in the food line, there's barely enough time left in the 20-minute lunch period to eat their food. Much of it ends up in the trash." (6)



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