

# "Youth Hungry at School: What Can Be Done?"

Youth Civic Leaders Summit – March 2-4, 2012

Youth-Led Issues Forum – "Healthy Living" Track

Hunger is a major problem in our country and the world. Research shows that hunger and poverty can have an effect on a child's performance in school. Hunger is definitely a problem in Missouri. Why has this happened? What can be done to remedy this problem? This is an invitation to discuss the "hungry at school" problem and consider possible courses of action. What ideas and opinions do youth have on this issue? How do they see it affecting their schools and communities? Below are three different views people have on how this issue can be solved:

<b>Approach (Choice) #1</b>	<b>Approach (Choice) #2</b>	<b>Approach (Choice) #3</b>
<b>Communities should take ownership for solving the hunger problem at school.</b>	<b>Schools should provide greater access to food/hunger programs for their students.</b>	<b>The agriculture industry should ensure food is accessible to all children at school.</b>
<b>What can be done?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities can bolster local food programs that reach out to students in and out of school (youth can help start programs)</li> <li>• Communities can raise funds to support school and afterschool programs</li> <li>• Communities can encourage volunteering with local food pantries/banks, farmers markets, food share programs, etc.</li> <li>• Communities can support citizens in taking responsibility, "random acts of kindness" by neighbors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools can ensure government-sponsored meal assistance is received by all eligible students</li> <li>• Schools can apply for existing Federal, state, and local hunger/food programs</li> <li>• Schools can adopt school policies that improve food access and local food consumption</li> <li>• Schools can support students in raising awareness and educating school and community leaders, fellow students, and their families about hunger programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms, agribusinesses, food processing and distribution centers, and big agricultural corporations can:</li> <li>• Play a larger role in making food more affordable and accessible to children</li> <li>• Direct more private sector dollars to directly combating school hunger</li> <li>• Offer gleaning programs, donate produce to schools and afterschool programs</li> <li>• Sponsor community holiday meals and other events to feed children</li> </ul>
<b>Trade-offs (the "give and take")</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities have a limited resource base (i.e. one grocery store, rural grocery stores may be adversely affected)</li> <li>• Asking too much from same audience; other funding opportunities (outside the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government-sponsored programs do not always provide the most nutritious food that kids need</li> <li>• Schools have limited ability to apply for and manage food program grants, could be directed more toward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms and businesses cannot solve hunger alone, requires responsibility of families and communities</li> <li>• Corporations may wind up passing the cost of additional programs on to consumers, driving up prices</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>community) may be missed</li> <li>Youth and adult volunteers are already busy with many other activities, would have to let go of something else</li> <li>To reach more hungry children, schools and community organizations need to be involved</li> </ul>	<p>helping students learn and succeed in school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving access to food and local food consumption can be more costly for schools, taxpayers</li> <li>Raising awareness of school programs takes time away from students focusing on their grades and test scores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gleaning and donation programs are seasonal at best, while hunger is year-round</li> <li>One-time events or short-term efforts may improve the image of companies, but do not build capacity to end hunger</li> </ul>
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**What the "critics" say**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hunger issue is bigger than the community, requires government and business participation</li> <li>Raising money alone won't solve the problem, does not address the root causes of hunger</li> <li>Volunteering provides short-term relief, but does not offer a long-term solution</li> <li>It takes more than good neighbors, actions by citizens are hard to keep going</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relying on schools for food encourages a "hand-out" mindset and makes families more dependent on the government</li> <li>Schools are being asked to do too much already, feeding children is the responsibility of families</li> <li>Kids eat more than just at school, policy changes need to be more far-reaching than just schools</li> <li>Awareness and education is not enough, people can know about something but choose not to use it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses exist to make profit, they are not responsible for solving big social issues like hunger</li> <li>Companies deciding how to invest in school hunger programs leave schools and communities without a voice</li> <li>Donating food does not mean that schools will know how to prepare it or that kids would actually eat it</li> <li>Companies tend to only give in the communities where they are located, meaning other communities would be left out</li> </ul>
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**Let's discuss!**

- What do we like about this choice?
- What do we dislike about this choice? What would it take if we were to choose this route?
- Are there people or groups who would support or oppose this choice?
- Are there any other choices we did not discuss?

**Time to reflect!**

- What did you learn about the effects of this issue on your community?
- Has your thinking about the issue changed as a result of today's discussion?
- How can we use what we have learned today?
- What can you do to make a difference?

**Wrapping it up...**

- What aspects of this issue seemed the most difficult to you?
- What were some common concerns the group shared?
- Were there any trade-offs that most people would accept? Would not accept?
- Did the group identify any shared directions for actions to take?