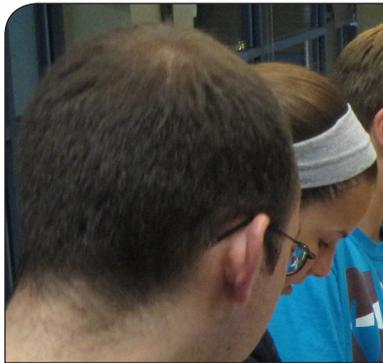


FOOD INSECURITY AND SUPPORT



CONTEXT

Food insecurity is defined as (1) low access to food, (2) reduced access to good quality or desirable food choices, and (3) having anxiety or concerns about having sufficient food in your home. Research shows that hunger and food insecurity can negatively impact cognitive development and school performance.³ The stigma associated with seeking or receiving assistance, as well as other barriers to adequate nutrition, should be addressed by the wider community.

Some creative solutions include the Family Market nights at Carlin Springs Community School. As families come for food distribution from the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC), volunteers with Virginia Cooperative Extension and AFAC conduct cooking activities with students. Oakridge and Hoffman-Boston, as well as Randolph preK, provide breakfast in the classroom each morning during the regular school day. Programs like these help eliminate barriers for children to access a healthy breakfast, which has been associated with improved cognitive function, reduced absenteeism, and improved mood.³

FINDINGS

In 2018, AFAC served more than 12,000 individuals, 1/3 of whom were under the age of 18. Even with supports in place, approximately 10% of secondary students who were surveyed in 2017 said they experienced hunger from not having enough food in their home.⁴

The County Health Rankings and Roadmap program provides measures of health factors, including food insecurity. For 2015, they estimate that about 18,010 individuals in Arlington were food insecure.⁵

Nearly 1/3 of all APS students receive free or reduced fee meals. Food insecurity exists in Arlington, with 35% of the 12,429 individuals served by AFAC being children.

31% of Arlington Public School (APS) students received free or reduced meals during the 2017-18 school year.²

A little more than 1 in 10 APS students in middle and high school report that they have experienced hunger from not having enough food in their homes.⁴

