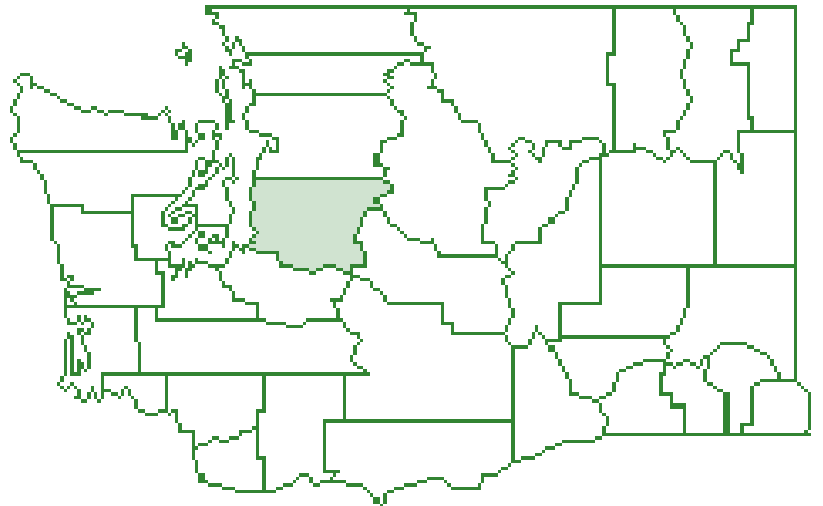


# Nutrition Hubs

Building healthy, hunger-free schools in King County, Washington



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# Background

One in five children in Washington State struggles with food insecurity<sup>1</sup>. Children struggling with food security are significantly disadvantaged in schools in part because they cannot focus or learn. Food insecure children have increased behavioral challenges, lower energy levels, trouble focusing, and lower scores on math tests<sup>2</sup>. Food insecurity permeates school and classroom walls in many ways, preventing children from accessing a good education.

Fortunately, childhood hunger in schools is preventable. Existing programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) show that it is possible to feed every child in the United States a nutritious meal. NSLP makes it possible for students to focus on their classes and ensures that every child will receive a hot meal every day. For children from food insecure homes, this can be an important source of stability.

However, one meal during the school day is not enough to meet students' needs. Several other anti-hunger programs, including National School Breakfast, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Afterschool Snack and Supper, exist to bring food to children where they live, learn, and play. However, these programs are vastly underutilized. Washington State is #43 in the nation for utilization of the School Breakfast Program and #39 for utilization of SFSP. Additional work is needed to take full advantage of the benefits of these programs.

There are a number of other programs in the private and nonprofit sector that seek to increase child food security. Food banks and local organizations partner with schools to provide food for weekends and school breaks, often called backpack programs. School nurses and counselors keep snacks in their offices to offer to hungry students as needed. Mentorship and tutoring programs try to ensure that food is available through provisions of healthy snacks.

## What's the problem?

- One in five children in Washington struggles with food insecurity.
- Hungry kids can't learn.
- Existing solutions are underutilized.

**Nutrition hubs can increase access to child nutrition programs and improve learning outcomes.**

For students and their families, trying to navigate this complex landscape of food and service providers can be challenging. One solution is the creation of a center, or Nutrition Hub, focused on enhancing student food security. Nutrition Hubs will draw on and collaborate with existing school structures, such as health centers and nutrition education programs. They will provide a connection to resources to improve food security and general economic stability.

This report will outline the structure of Nutrition Hubs and explain the goals and vision for this project. It will provide resources for working with AmeriCorps, partnering with schools, collaborating with community partners and collecting data. This report is an outline for how Nutrition Hubs will operate in its pilot year.

<sup>1</sup>Northwest Harvest, "WA Hunger Facts," <http://www.northwestharvest.org/wa-hunger-facts>

<sup>2</sup>No Kid Hungry, "Hunger in our Schools," [http://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/NKH\\_TeachersReport\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/NKH_TeachersReport_2013.pdf)

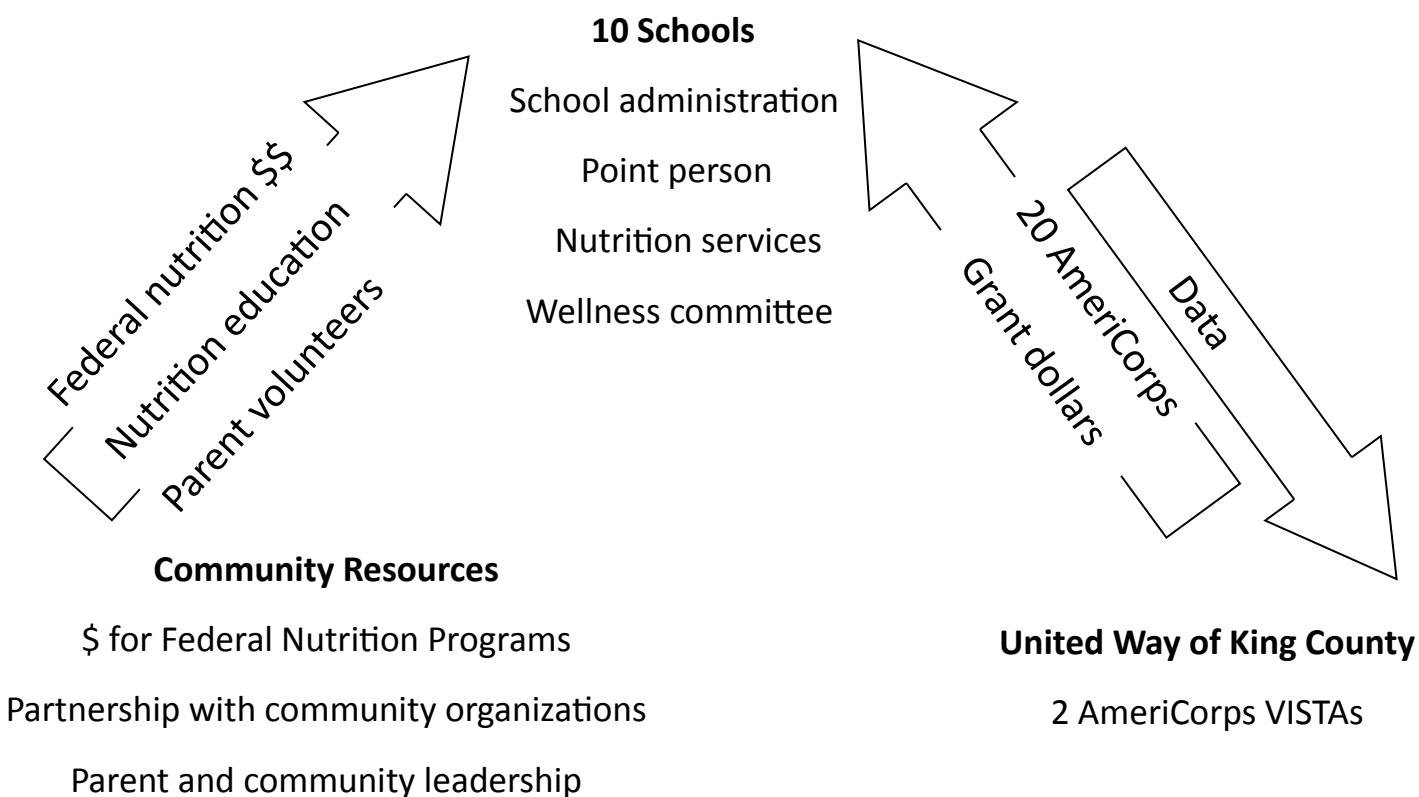
# Program Structure

In the 2015-2016 school year, ten schools across King County will launch Nutrition Hubs. Schools at all grade levels are encouraged to apply to United Way of King County for nutrition hub staffing and funding. Each school will receive staffing from two AmeriCorps members (twenty total) and additional funding for programming. Two AmeriCorps VISTAs will be stationed at United Way of King County to support the AmeriCorps members in

Ten schools across King County will receive two full-time AmeriCorps members to staff Nutrition Hubs at their schools.

schools and evaluate programs. This pilot program will expand in future years. By 2020, 50 high-need schools across King County will contain Nutrition Hubs.

The AmeriCorps will work with and be supervised by a point person within the school. This could be a school nurse, teacher, administrator, counselor, family coordinator, or community partner working within the school. This person, in collaboration with school staff and administrators, will apply to United Way of King County to receive two AmeriCorps members. For their application, school staff will outline their specific vision for what a Nutrition Hub could look like at their school, as well as a work plan for reaching their goals.



**Nutrition Hubs:** Additional staff and resources can improve knowledge of and access to child nutrition programs, leading to increased CNP utilization, improved child food security, and heightened academic achievement.

### INPUTS

20 AmeriCorps Members  
UWKC staff leadership  
Funding and staffing for schools  
Small startup grants available to schools for CACFP Breakfast After the Bell, and summer meals sites  
Website with information and toolkits for increasing utilization of child nutrition programs  
Public policy engagement at a state, local, and federal level  
Marketing and outreach

### ACTIVITIES

At a minimum each team will:  
Create a plan for increasing participation in nutrition programs  
Promote school breakfast through supporting the school in starting a Breakfast After the Bell program and/or advertising and outreach.  
Establish an afterschool meals program  
Host a summer meals program  
Collaborate with local food banks or nonprofits to provide weekend and break backpacks  
Offer nutrition education during or after school  
Participate in school wellness committees  
Communicate with school community through newsletter, email, or social media

### OUTPUTS

Each Team will:  
Recruit and manage 25 parent and community volunteers  
Serve 300 kids  
Reduce food insecurity for at least 10% of families  
Conduct 3 community events  
Establish 10 community partnerships  
Conduct a minimum of 25 nutrition classes  
Create or strengthen school wellness committee  
Contributions to school newsletter and/or create a new wellness newsletter

### Short-Term Outcomes

3,000 kids are aware of and participate in nutrition programs  
80% of students report awareness of the impact of eating breakfast on health  
Parents and community aware of nutrition hub as a resource  
Parents and community aware of opportunity to participate in school wellness committees.

### Medium-Term Outcomes

1,000 parents report increased food security of themselves and their children  
15% increase in summer meals participation  
20% increase in school breakfast participation  
60% of students show progress in nutrition education.  
Core group of 10-15 parents and community members meet regularly as part of wellness committee

### Long-Term Outcomes

50 high-need schools engaged  
40% fewer school absences, 17% fewer suspensions, & 3.75% higher test scores allowing more kids to graduate on time  
Schools hire full-time nutrition and basic needs outreach staff  
Strong parent voice in wellness committee leading to influence and advocacy in school and district

## Goals

1. Increase school-level food security.
2. Increase participation in federal nutrition programs, including school breakfast, at-risk afterschool meals, and summer meals.
3. Promote school breakfast and support school in establishing a Breakfast After the Bell program.
4. Support or establish an Afterschool Meals program in collaboration with community partners.
5. Host a Summer Meals program, including relevant programming.
6. Run at least three events dedicated to increasing student food security.
7. Conduct nutrition education, either by partnering with another organization or by teaching nutrition education themselves.
8. Outreach and relationship- building with parents and school community, including participation in/ support of school wellness committee.
9. Data collection on impact of nutrition hub programming
10. Engage partners to provide on-site access to resources, including SNAP and free tax preparation

## Vision

In its first several years, Nutrition Hubs will focus on forming relationships and solidifying its place within the school building. These first few years of the program will be highly experimental, and there should be room to try different programming and approaches to see what is most effective. Here are some big- picture goals for Nutrition Hubs that should be revisited and changed with experience.

In 2020, Nutrition Hubs will:

1. Expand to all high- need schools within South Seattle and South King County.
2. Hire a stable, full- time coordinator for nutrition and food security. AmeriCorps members will assist them.
3. Encourage a strong parent presence on wellness committee in decision-making position.
4. Provide wraparound services, expanding services to include income supports, housing assistance, and other basic need provision.
5. Create programming and policies to encourage a healthy school environment: PE, healthy snacks, nutrition education, school gardens.



# AmeriCorp Recommendations

AmeriCorps members will form and shape this program in the first several years. Corps members will work closely with their school community. Though there will be support systems for Corps members, much of the work they do will be based on their own initiative and ability. Choosing, training, and supporting AmeriCorps members is essential to the success of Nutrition Hubs in general.

## Criteria for Picking AmeriCorps Members

These criteria represent ideal qualities and most likely will not all be found in one candidate. Form teams of two AmeriCorps attempting to cover as many of these qualities as possible.

- AmeriCorps members should have a strong understanding of the community the school serves. If possible, AmeriCorps members should live in or have direct relationships with the school community, such as being parents, neighbors, or alumni. Targeted recruiting and hiring should happen to achieve this goal.
- Experience or understanding of federal child nutrition programs.
- Good understanding of systemic causes of poverty and hunger.
- Experience working with schools or school districts.
- Experience working with children or teens.
- Experience with or understanding of data collection methods and techniques.
- Nice, friendly, and approachable.

## Tips for Targeted Outreach

- Collaborate with community partners, including WABS, Healthy King County Coalition, and Children's Alliance for outreach for applicants.
- Ask family resource coordinators at schools to recommend candidates.
- Start outreach at UWKC's other programming, such as Community Resource Exchange (CRE) and Free Tax sites.
- Advertise in unemployment offices.

# Sample AmeriCorp Evaluation

## 1. Experience working with children or teens:

- Does the applicant have experience working with children or teens?
- Interest level in working with children or teens?

## 2. School or system experience:

- Experience working in or with schools?
- Experience navigating complicated, bureaucratic systems?
- Teaching experience?
- Experience managing up?

## 3. Data collection:

- Qualitative, including interviews, storytelling, and focus groups?
- Quantitative, including surveys?

## 4. Background knowledge of community:

- Relationship with a specific school?
- Understanding of the school's environment, politics, history, or needs?
- If not, experience working in a community that was not their own? What made them successful? What were some challenges?

## 5. Systemic understanding:

- Understanding of root causes of hunger or poverty?
- Understanding of challenges and strengths in the education system?
- Understanding of child nutrition programs?

## 6. Managing volunteers:

- Recruiting and managing volunteers?
- Other recruitment or management experience?
- Friendliness and openness?

## Recommended Training for AmeriCorps

Topic	Resources and Potential Partners
School structure	Apple Corps, PTA, school administrators
Racial equity	Children's Alliance Seattle Public Schools Race Equity Show Apple Corps/Solid Ground
Volunteer management	UWKC staff
Data collection	UWKC staff
Child nutrition programs	UWKC staff and VISTA alumni
Backpack programs/ emergency food system	Northwest Harvest
Team building	UWKC
Nutrition Education	Public Health
Project engagement and event planning	UWKC staff
Parent, Teen, and Community Engagement	WABS, Children's Alliance, Community for Youth
Social media	

## AmeriCorps Sustainability

Because AmeriCorps is a year-long program, staff turnover will happen every year. Sustainability is a major concern for any program primarily staffed by AmeriCorps members. Along with their site supervisor, AmeriCorps should establish a sustainability plan at the *beginning* of their placement. Every sustainability plan will be different, but some aspects could include:

- Carefully document all projects, including important contacts.
- Set multi-year goals and track progress. New AmeriCorps should receive documentation of the previous year's goal setting.
- Establish multi-year commitments with site supervisors. The same site supervisor will go a long way in ensuring sustainability.

### Sample Daily Activities

- Encourage kids to eat breakfast
- Check in with parents dropping off kids at school
- Meet with family coordinator to go over students' needs
- Advertise summer meal program
- Collaborate with teens to design summer meals flyers
- Work with nutrition services to create a taste tests to improve lunch quality
- Prep for afterschool nutrition and cooking club
- Write weekly newsletter to parents advertising outreach events
- Meet with food bank to coordinate weekend backpack program
- Run afterschool cooking and nutrition class
- Meet with parents about participation in school wellness committee
- Connect afterschool tutoring group to CACFP program
- Check in with county-wide Nutrition Hub team to collaborate and address common challenges.

# School Recommendations

School buildings and districts are large, complex systems that can at times be difficult to work with. United Way of King County's previous work with schools has revealed a number of common challenges, including communication with school officials and lack of time and resources. One of the main goals of Nutrition Hubs is to assist students and families in navigating this system. It is critical in the early years of this program that we work with schools who agree with the mission of nutrition hubs and are willing to assist AmeriCorps members in working within the school system.

## Criteria for Picking Schools

- School community is interested in Nutrition Hubs and has a clear vision for what role they will fulfill within the school.
- Point person within school (family resource coordinator, nurses, teachers, administrators) has an understanding of the need within the school and is willing to act as a supervisor for AmeriCorps.
- Staff demonstrates commitment to reducing food security.
- High need (measured by FRL, Title I status, or staff testimonial).
- Office space/ room for AmeriCorps to set up.
- Willing to make a multi- year commitment to Nutrition Hubs.

## School Wellness Committees

As part of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, all schools that receive federal funding for the school lunch and breakfast programs must instate a [school wellness policy](#)<sup>3</sup>. School wellness policies outline steps the school will take to increase health and wellness among the student body, as well as establishing school leadership and permitting public participation in forming this policy.

Though not explicitly part of the legislation, many schools have used this opportunity to formulate school wellness committees. These wellness committees meet to create and implement school wellness policies and are made up of school staff,

<sup>3</sup> USDA, "Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Under the Healthy, Hunger– Free Kids Act of 2010." <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/LWppropulessummary.pdf>

teachers, and administrators; community organizations; and parents and community members. School wellness committees are a great way for parents and community members to become involved in school health and nutrition.

The makeup of school wellness committees varies greatly between schools. Some committees are at a building level while others meet at a district level. Some have a high level of parent involvement while others are primarily composed of school staff and administrators. Other schools may not have a wellness committee that meets regularly.

Part of a school's application to receive AmeriCorps and Nutrition Hub funding should include:

- A copy of the school's wellness policy
- A description of the school's process in creating that policy
- The role of parents and community members in contributing to creating and implementing the policy.

A primary goal for Nutrition Hubs is to increase parent participation in wellness and nutrition at the school level. Collaborating with or participating in wellness committees is one way to achieve this goal.

## **Outreach to Schools**

In previous United Way initiatives with schools, we have reached out to administrators, school boards, and district-level staff. This approach led to mixed results. While administrators have the power to approve vast changes within the school or school district, they are extremely busy and constantly dealing with requests for changes. A more effective approach is to work directly with school-level staff who have direct relationships with students. This can include direct outreach to:

- Guidance counselors
- Family resource coordinators
- Nurses
- Coaches
- Front office staff
- Mentors
- Vice principals
- School psychologists

# General Tips for Nutrition Hubs

These recommendations were gleaned from meetings with community organizations currently working in schools. We hope to learn from their experience.

- Allow flexibility in model to work with existing organizations within the school. Most schools already have health centers, family coordinators, and other nonprofits working on related issues.
- Nutrition hubs will have to find their “niche” within the community.
  - One possible niche is as an organizer/ backbone to existing groups. For example, Nutrition Hubs could facilitate meetings between separate groups (administration, coaches, family resource coordinator, nutrition educator, food bank running backpack program, food service director).
  - Another is providing resources to improve the quality of school food through community gardens, school- based farmers markets, or scratch cooking classes.
- Direct food and resource distribution should be discreet and incorporated into larger programming. This includes afterschool meals, summer meals, or food banking within sites. Students and families, especially older students, do NOT want to be singled out as needing food.
  - Could be incorporated into cooking/nutrition programs, literacy programs, after school clubs, or family nights.
- Parent engagement is essential for student success, especially around food security. Create specific goals for family engagement and seek family feedback on food security needs.
  - Go to every family/parent event and talk to parents where they already interact with schools.
  - In elementary schools, reach out to parents at drop-off and pick up.
  - Find the person within the school who parents would go to if they had a concern. It could be a family coordinator, an administrator, or the person at the front desk.

- Be aware of complex internal politics between administrators, teachers, and parents. These groups often have underlying issues/ communication breaks- learn what these look like when planning any program.
  - Though principal is important gatekeeper, s/he will often not have direct knowledge or relationships with families or students. Make sure to speak to those people who have direct relationships with students and families and involve them in the conversation.
- Be aware of the stigmas around hunger. Increasing reports of kids complaining of hunger may not actually indicate that there is more hunger but that kids are more comfortable talking about it, which could indicate a positive change.

## **Racial Equity Recommendations**

Food insecurity disproportionately impacts children of color and children from immigrant and refugee families. Addressing food security at the school-level cannot be effective without examining the historical and institutional racism that contributed to creating this inequity. AmeriCorps members need to actively engage with undoing institutional racism at the school level for nutrition hubs to effectively and equitably reach the kids most at risk of food insecurity. Here is an (incomplete) list of recommendations to incorporate a racial equity lens into nutrition hubs planning and execution:

- Recruit and hire AmeriCorps to work in schools using a racial equity lens. When possible, hire individuals who are already connected to the schools in which they will be working. Look for individuals who are culturally representative of the communities they will be serving and/or have the language skills necessary to interact with the school community, particularly in areas that have high immigrant populations.
  - Collaborate with community- based partners (see below) for outreach to school community to expand hiring pool.
  - Meet one-on-one with interested applicants who may have difficulty filling out the online AmeriCorps applications. Offer assistance in filling out the application to qualified applicants.
  - Honor applicant’s lived experience and personal, firsthand knowledge of the community as expertise.



- AmeriCorp members from outside the school community should make a concerted effort to learn about the history and culture of the school community. Some actions they could take include:
  - Attending PTA meetings and parent nights.
  - Asking a longtime member of the community to give you a tour of the community, or teach you about the community's history. Respect their time and their expertise.
  - Learning about the local environment around the school. Is the school located in a food desert? What is the public transportation like? Do kids have safe spaces to play outside?
- All AmeriCorps members should go through racial equity training before starting in schools.
- Nutrition education and food interventions should be culturally appropriate and tailored to specific schools, communities, and individuals. [This toolkit](#)<sup>4</sup> for cultural competence in nutrition education can serve as a guide.
- Consistently seek feedback from parents and students, especially parents and students who are traditionally left out of school engagement, such as people of color and people from immigrant and refugee communities.
  - Meet with parents to ascertain their specific needs and perspectives on the program.
  - Conduct regular focus groups or surveys to get feedback.
  - Focus on relationship building with parents or school community members.
- Include nontraditional measures of data collection, including storytelling, in measurement of success of program.
- Nutrition hubs must first and foremost be accountable to the school communities they serve. Take comments from parents and students seriously. If you ask for feedback via focus group or survey, be sure to actually incorporate that feedback.

<sup>4</sup> National Black Child Development Institute, "Cultural Competence Improvement Tool." [http://www.nbcdi.org/sites/default/files/uploads/NBCDI.CCIT\\_.pdf](http://www.nbcdi.org/sites/default/files/uploads/NBCDI.CCIT_.pdf)

# Data Collection

Nutrition Hubs will evaluate how well they reach their goals by collecting data throughout their term in the school. AmeriCorps volunteers will work with school staff, parents, and students to conduct a community food assessment at the beginning and end of each school year. Success will also be measured by increased participation in federal child nutrition programs. Focus groups with parents should be conducted twice a school year to gain feedback on how the nutrition hub is meeting family needs.

Topic	Data points to collect	Measurement resources
General picture of food security at school level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a community food assessment at the beginning and end of every school year. Community food assessments are an opportunity to incorporate qualitative data, including storytelling, focus groups, and interviews. <b>Note:</b> Some schools and communities, particularly those that have partnered with nutrition education programs before, may already have collected complete or partial community food assessments. Seek out and build off this data instead of replicating it.</li> <li>Survey staff most in contact with students (teachers, nurses, coaches, counselors) about how often they see hunger among students.</li> </ul>	USDA ERS Community Food Security <a href="#">comprehensive toolkit</a>  WhyHunger Community Food Assessment <a href="#">toolkit</a>  No Kid Hungry Hunger in our Schools report for information on <a href="#">teacher surveys</a>
Participation in federal child nutrition programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WA Appleseed will use data-sharing agreement with OSPI to track changing participation in breakfast, summer, and afterschool meals.</li> <li>Number of students receiving free/reduced meals that are also receiving other services including summer meals, weekend/break backpacks, families receiving SNAP and WIC</li> <li>Participation in summer meals sites closest to school</li> <li>Increasing the number of summer and afterschool meals sites</li> </ul>	OSPI data collection

Topic	Data points to collect	Measurement resources
Secondary impacts on education and school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data schools are already collecting: disciplinary incidents, graduation rates, test scores, absences, nurse visits</li> <li>• Survey of teachers on impressions of student focus and concentration.</li> <li>• Parent participation in school wellness committee</li> </ul>	Breakfast survey methodology: Wisconsin school breakfast surveys
Impact of nutrition education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct pre/post survey of children taking nutrition education classes</li> <li>• Collaborate with other school groups, including health centers and nutrition educators, to measure increased student health</li> </ul>	Partners at AppleCorp and Public Health.  CA Department of Public Health nutrition survey
Racial equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on equity within data: make sure it is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income</li> </ul>	Data sharing agreement with school

## Sample Focus Group Questions for Parents

Focus groups are a good way to gain a general understanding of community needs and observations. AmeriCorps members should organize focus groups at least twice a year to seek feedback on Nutrition Hub programming. Along with seeking feedback on specific Nutrition Hubs programming, here are some general questions that could be used to understand community needs.

- What are your concerns about school food?
- What are your concerns about your child’s health and wellbeing?
- What is your favorite service offered at school?
- What additional services would you like to see the school offer that it doesn’t currently?
- If you were having difficulty, where would you to get food for your kids?
- What do you believe are barriers to student learning?

# Community Partners

There are many organizations in Seattle already working on promoting nutrition in low-income schools. We can work with these organizations, as well as people within schools, in planning and advising nutrition hubs.

Name of Organization	Description	Potential for Collaboration
Community for Youth	CfY is a mentorship program that matches adult volunteers as mentors to at-risk youth at a number of high schools. They have close relationships with a small number of individual students. In addition to mentorship, mentors often assist students in meeting basic needs.	CfY has good relationships with high schools and with a core group of teenagers. The teens have weekly meetings and could serve as good teen advisors, provide teen input on programming.
AppleCorps	AppleCorps provides nutrition education in at-risk elementary schools. They provide basic cooking classes and educate students about MyPlate. The nutrition education is integrated with other topics, including science and literary standards. Also involved in school wellness committees.	Support with nutrition education and evaluation. They have demonstrated an interest in including more food security and food justice in their curriculum.
YMCA	Sponsor for snacks, afterschool, and summer meals in schools. They also have good relationships with families and communities. In North KC schools, provide different kinds of programming where they also provide food. In South Seattle schools, mainly provide food for existing school programs.	Potential sponsor for AmeriCorps.
Action for Healthy Kids	AFHK is a national organization, focuses on healthy eating and physical activity. The coordinator works with schools to provides resources, trainings, and grants aligned with these priorities.	Specific trainings on topics such as breakfast, etc. Good relationships with schools. Experience with data collection

Communities in Schools	National program, we've talked specifically to CIS in Federal Way. This is a national dropout prevention program. School outreach coordinators help connect students to resources. Also run a mentorship program, homework help, etc.	Good partner interested in hosting Nutrition Hubs, in ten schools across Federal Way. CIS outreach staff have great relationships with students and schools
Public Health: Eat Better Feel Better	Former nutrition education program, now defunded Worked with schools around promoting MyPlate model. Data evaluation based on how much kids like vegetables.	Support and advice, especially around nutrition education and evaluation.
Public Health: Health Centers	Health centers across KC, mostly in high schools but some starting to open up in elementary schools. School health centers include a nurse practitioner, a mental health counselor, and an office manager. They can provide help with chronic care (allergies, asthma, etc) and with other health issues. Also provide mental healthcare and counseling	Potential sponsor of Nutrition Hubs. Health centers have expressed interest with more school food security outreach.
Children's Alliance	Advocacy for policies promoting children and families across WA. They work closely with impacted communities to promote advocacy and have a focus on education and health.	Good community connections through employed community organizers. Willing to help with outreach for AmeriCorp representative of their communities.
Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS)	WABS coordinates afterschool programming and professional development for teachers. They also host a parent engagement/ community organizing program called Natural Leaders in Northshore and Shoreline school districts.	Natural Leaders could be good candidates for AmeriCorp positions- many of them already operate small food pantries in schools. Good contacts for Northshore schools.

**Additional community partners to contact:** Northwest Harvest, CityYear Seattle, CPPS: Community and Parents in Public Schools, Got Green?, FEEST: Food Empowerment, Education, and Sustainability Team, Food \$ense, PTAs, Seattle Tilth.