



Childhood hunger in our community is very real and is increasing every day. At AISD, there are 16,421 students enrolled, and 9,737 of those receive free and reduced breakfast and lunch. That's 59.3% of the children right here in Abilene. Many of these children count on those two meals each day because that may be all they have to eat until school the next day.

In our thirteen county service area, there are approximately 27,123 children living at or below the federal poverty level. This equates to food insecurity (not knowing if they will have enough to eat) for some, but for others it means going to bed hungry. It is hard for children to learn or even play when they are hungry.

Texas and New Mexico have the highest rate of childhood hunger.

We opened our Kids Cafe site in September 2003. We provide a hot, nutritious evening meal to an average of 150 children 4- nights a week. That is 2,400+ meals each month.

Through a relationship with the Abilene School District and the Boys & Girls Club of Abilene, the Food Bank supports one Kids Café at the Club located at Fannin Elementary School. At our Kids Cafes, neighborhood children find a safe, nurturing place to go in the afternoon to stay, while learning to use the computer, receive help with homework, and other activities. Before going home in the evening, we provide them a hot meal Monday through Thursday. This program takes place during the school year. The Food Bank supplies all the food and supplies, and we pay the salary of the AISD cooks to prepare the meals. It is a tremendous program for the kids and their parents are very appreciative of the help.

Site selection depends on a number of factors. First and foremost, at least 90% of the child population must receive free or reduced meals from the school. The site needs to be in an established program that caters to children, such as Boys & Girls Club. It must be in a neighborhood that is easily accessible for children to either walk or ride their bikes to the site.