

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from Kids Eat Right

Academic Success

What every administrator, educator, and parent should know about academic success and the school wellness environment



Every school wants academic success for its students. A healthy school climate is key to optimizing student wellness and learning.

Diet and physical activity can impact:

- Test scores
- Concentration
- Behavior
- Attendance
- Development of chronic diseases

Good Nutrition Helps Students Learn

Students who eat healthier **perform better** in school. Nutrients are important for childhood growth and development.¹

Not sure where to start? Start with breakfast¹.

As we have all heard, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Unfortunately, many kids skip breakfast. In a recent survey, 62% of students skipped breakfast at least once in seven days prior to the survey, and 13% of students skipped breakfast on all seven days. **Skipping breakfast can decrease test scores, even in well-nourished children.**

Students who **eat breakfast** have **better attendance rates and score higher on tests**. On standardized math tests, students score 17.5% higher on average.² Students who eat **school breakfast** have **fewer nurses' office visits and improved behavior**.¹

Physical Activity Helps Kids Learn

Physical activity helps improve^{1,2}:

- Grade point average
- Rate of learning
- Classroom behaviors
- Cognitive development

Even short bursts of physical activity in the classroom helps improve²:

- Indicators of cognitive skills
- Attitudes
- Academic achievement
- Behavior

Want better test scores? Increase physical activity time!

Research shows that students who are **more physically active** during school and on weekends excel! They score **higher on reading, math, and spelling standardized tests.**^{1,2,3}

Help improve your school's wellness environment:^{1,2}

- Be a school wellness champion (promote nutrition education, healthy food choices, and physical activity time at school).
- Share the link between nutrition, physical activity, and academic success with others.
- Establish a wellness committee and implement a new or revised wellness policy.

Pop Quiz

- Q:** To increase test scores, students need more academic time and less physical activity time.
- A:** False. Research shows that more PE time actually may increase test scores, and does not decrease them. Increased recess time shows improved cognitive skills, problem-solving skills, attitudes, and academic behavior. Recent studies show that students need more physical activity and playtime to develop the problem-solving part of the brain.^{1,2,3}
- Q:** How can our school decrease absenteeism?
- A:** Encourage students to eat school breakfast. Students who eat breakfast at school are tardy or absent less often.^{1,2,3}

- Involve students in school wellness decisions.
- Encourage and expand school breakfast.
- Ensure all foods served or sold at school are healthy and appealing to students.

For tips, articles, recipes and videos to help you shop smart, cook healthy and eat right, visit: www.kidseatright.org

1. "The Wellness Impact: Enhancing Academic Success through Healthy School Environments." GENYOUth Foundation; 2013.
2. "The Learning Connection." *Action for Healthy Kids*; 2013.
3. "The Association Between School-based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance." CDC Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.

This tip sheet is provided by:

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