

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

### **Not sure where to start? Start with breakfast<sup>1</sup>.**

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.<sup>2</sup> Students who eat **school breakfast** have **fewer nurses' office visits and improved behavior**.<sup>1</sup>

## Physical Activity Helps Kids Learn

### Physical activity helps improve<sup>1,2</sup>:

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

### Even short bursts of physical activity in the classroom helps improve<sup>2</sup>:

- 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.**<sup>1,2,3</sup>

### Help improve your school's wellness environment:<sup>1,2</sup>

- 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.<sup>1,2,3</sup>
- 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.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

- 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.

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**For tips, articles, recipes and videos to help you shop smart, cook healthy and eat right, visit: [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org)**

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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.

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