

Integrating health and wellness into schools not only helps students form healthy habits for life, but it also gives them an academic advantage—what Action for Healthy Kids calls The Learning Connection. The connections between health and academic achievement are best understood through the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development’s (ASCD) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model. This model links five key tenets often considered foundational to a child’s educational experience and most important to school administrators and educators—safe, engaged, supported, challenged and healthy—with 10 key components of school health.¹



1 in 3 U.S. children are overweight or obese. Overweight kindergartners had significantly lower math/reading scores than those at a healthy weight.²

Eating school breakfast positively affects student attendance, which leads to high academic achievement.³

Children who ate school breakfast increased their math grades by **+0.3** points based on a 4.0 scale.³

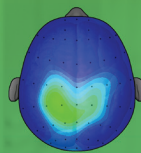
Participation in breakfast programs is associated with:

- Increased grades and test scores
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved cognitive function
- Memory and attention improvement¹

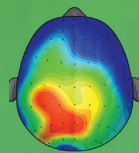


Physical activity is **positively associated** with students’ **cognitive functioning**¹ which includes ability to pay attention, memory, and IQ test scores.

A 20-minute walk demonstrates a brain that is activated and primed to learn.⁴



after 20 minutes of sitting quietly



after 20 minutes of walking



Participation in PE class is associated with **better grades, test scores, and classroom behavior**.¹



Physical activity can be added to school curriculum without hindering student academics.

Taking time from PE programs does not enhance grades in academic subjects.⁶



High quality diets (and increases in micronutrients¹) **improve cognition** and the ability to perform well during short-term memory tests.⁵

Children with **increased cholesterol intake** had **poor performance** on short-term memory and cognition testing.⁶

Having a healthy diet has shown **improvements to short-term memory** among elementary school students.⁵



52%

of US high school students with mostly A’s were **physically active for ≥60 minutes/day, 5+ days/week** compared to 38% of students with mostly Ds/Fs.⁸



Students of healthy weight are **21% more likely** to successfully attain a college degree.⁷

HOW YOU CAN USE THIS INFORMATION TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC SUCCESS:

Provide students with physical activity before, during and after the school day, educate them on the importance of healthy eating, and provide access to healthy foods during the school day.

Build support of school administration, staff and families by sharing how school wellness programs, including physical activity and nutrition initiatives, improve academic achievement and student wellness.

Support staff in implementing the district’s wellness policy and role modeling healthy eating and physical activity for students.

Form a team that includes all components represented in the WSCC model to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative school health environment.

Visit actionforhealthykids.org for resources to support your school’s health programming.