

Hungry Minds Need Healthy Food:

How Hunger Hurts Academic Success

When children are forced to skip meals, or can't access high quality nutrition, their academic performance suffers. Hungry children are more likely to:

- have lower math and reading scores and are more likely to have to repeat a grade¹
- exhibit oppositional or aggressive behavior and behave hyperactively and impulsively²
- miss more school than their classmates who have enough to eat³
- suffer from anxiety and depression and have trouble paying attention in school⁴
- have received special education services, or received mental health counseling, than low-income children who do not experience hunger.⁵



When young learners have access to high quality nutrition they are prepared for success. Programs like School Breakfast, Basic Food, State Food Assistance, and Afterschool Meals ensure that all children have access to the food they need to be successful.

- When hungry kids receive school meals they miss fewer days of school.⁶
- Eating breakfast improves children's performance on demanding mental tasks and helps them keep from becoming frustrated with difficult or challenging projects.⁷
- Children in families that receive Basic Food Benefits are less likely to be developmentally delayed than other low income children.⁸
- Children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.⁹



¹ (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo Jr, 2001)

² (Kleinman, 1998)

³ (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo Jr, 2001)

⁴ (Kleinman, 1998)

⁵ (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo Jr, 2001)

⁶ (Kristjansson & ALI, 2009)

⁷ (Bellisle, 2004)

⁸ (Children's Health Watch, 2012)

⁹ (Vaisman, 1996)



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