

March is National Nutrition Month & National School Breakfast Week is March 4-8

March is designated annually by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as National Nutrition Month, focusing attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

As adults, we are all aware of the countless benefits of eating right and staying active while we forcefully remind ourselves of our now-forgotten New Year's resolutions. But how often do we stop to think of how a young person's access to balanced, nutritious food might affect their overall development and well-being?

In honor of National School Breakfast Week, which is March 4-8, the following facts are adapted from the article, "Benefits of Eating Breakfast for Students" (<https://healthyeating.sfgate.com/benefits-eating-breakfast-students-7697.html>):

- Students who eat a healthy breakfast tend to have **better concentration** than students who skip breakfast altogether. When the day starts with breakfast, students can focus on the task at hand and retain that new information better than students who are hungry.
- Students who eat breakfast before starting their school day tend to **score better on academic tests** in math, reading, and science. Researchers believe that this is because the breakfast provides the energy necessary to increase cognitive, or thinking, speed and problem-solving skills.
- When students wake up after an overnight fast and go to school without eating breakfast, they start the day with low blood sugar that just keeps getting lower. This can leave them feeling slow and sluggish and make it more difficult to get through the day. Eating a healthy breakfast before school raises blood sugar to a healthy level and **provides the necessary energy** that students need to perform well in class until lunchtime.
- Eating breakfast can help students **meet their daily nutrient needs more easily**.
- Research shows that students who regularly eat breakfast have an easier time **maintaining a healthy body weight** than students who are regular breakfast skippers.

The data is clear, eating breakfast is key to academic success and overall well-being of children and teens. Yet, as cited by a 2018 Hunger Solutions New York report, over two-thirds (66%) of low-income children participate in lunch, while only one-third (32%) participate in breakfast.

Many schools here locally are closing the participation gap between breakfast and lunch. For example, in 2018, Beverly J Martin Elementary, Enfield Elementary, and Groton Central Schools all initiated universal free meal programs, guaranteeing stigma-free access to breakfast and lunch for all children. Groton already reports a 46% increase in breakfast participation!

Tompkins County is rich with programming and caring adults to advocate for and support ready access to nutritious foods in schools. Learn more by visiting:

<http://nutrition.citompkins.org/>
<https://www.foodbankst.org/>
<https://hungersolutionsny.org/school-meals-hub-ny-0/>

Monthly Messages are brought to you by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department, a proud partner of The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth.

If you have further questions or comments about this message or would like information on how to become involved with the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, please email bnugent@tompkins-co.org.

