



Family Meals May Help Children Succeed In School

(NAPSA)—Here's food for thought: Helping your child succeed in school may be as easy as sitting down for a family meal. Studies suggest that family meals play a key role in raising high-achieving, healthy and well-adjusted children.

When families eat together and talk with children, they set a pattern for healthy habits with benefits that last a lifetime.

Academic Success

Frequent family meals are linked with being successful in school. A University of Illinois study found that children ages 7 to 11 who did well in school and on achievement tests generally spent large amounts of time eating meals with their families. Research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) also found that teens who ate with their families most often were more likely to get As and Bs in their classes.

Optimal Nutrition

Research also supports a link between family meals and nutrition. A Harvard University study published in the Archives of Family Medicine found that families who ate together almost every day generally consumed more important nutrients such as calcium, fiber, iron and vitamins B6, B12, C and E, and less overall fat, than families who rarely ate together. During adolescence, family meals also contribute to higher daily intakes of fruit, vegetables and calcium, and lower intakes of soft drinks.

Social Skills

Mealtime conversation promotes positive self-esteem in children and brings the family together. Recent research shows that children whose



Homemade meals can help parents serve up a lifetime of success for their children.

parents shared ideas and talked to them often were about 40 percent less likely to bully others. Family meals also provide an opportunity for parents to engage children in the planning, preparation and enjoyment of food, which creates a lasting and positive relationship with food.

To help your child succeed in school and life with healthy family meals, consider these tips:

- Include foods from all the food groups and try new foods together.
- Serve milk with dinner to make sure everyone gets enough calcium and vitamin D.
- Try to avoid mobile phones and music devices and turn off the television during mealtime.
- Use conversation starters and ask open-ended questions to get children talking.

Learn More

For more ideas on healthy family meals, parents can visit www.MealsMatter.org, a free family nutrition and meal-planning website sponsored by the Dairy Council of California. There, families can explore time-saving tools such as a meal planner, shopping-list generator and a new, online 30-Minute Family Meals cookbook.