



Pointers for Parents

On The Breakfast Menu: Better Grades, Focus

(NAPSA)—Breakfast and better grades seem to go hand in hand. That's the word from experts, such as those at the United States Department of Agriculture, who say students who start the day with breakfast perform better at school.

Research shows that eating breakfast can help improve math grades, standardized test scores and vocabulary skills. While boosting brainpower, breakfast has also been shown to curb behavior problems, reduce absenteeism and help children focus.

Plus, those who eat breakfast generally have healthier diets and are at less risk to become overweight.

Here are some tips to help you help your kids start the day right and be ready to do well in school:

- **Organize the night before.** Set the table and put out cereal, whole-grain bread and other non-perishable items. Make fresh fruit, low-fat/fat-free milk, low-fat/fat-free yogurt and 100 percent fruit juice easy to find in the fridge.

- **Get up 15 minutes early** to have time to eat.

- **Toss a nutritious breakfast in a bag** for kids to eat on the way to school. Nutrient-rich cereal bars, mini cereal boxes, low-fat/fat-free yogurt cups, fresh fruit and 100 percent juice boxes are just a few options.

- **Call your child's school** to see about eligibility and availability of school breakfast.

Unfortunately, according to the Food Research and Action Center, an estimated one out of six children doesn't get proper nourishment at home. Some say this number is moving even higher as a result of the economy.



Experts say school breakfast programs can help ensure that kids get healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat/fat-free dairy, to jump-start their day.

“The concept is simple: Children who are better nourished learn better. If children don't get to eat at home, there are school breakfast programs to help them get healthy foods like fruits, low-fat and fat-free dairy and whole grains to jump-start their day,” says Rob Bisceglie, executive director of Action for Healthy Kids.

However, less than half of the children receiving free or reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program also eat breakfast at school. Last school year, a family of four that made \$28,665 a year or less qualified for free school breakfast. The federal government is raising the salary cap for the 2009-10 school year.

Action for Healthy Kids recognizes the importance of providing kids with a healthy breakfast. That's why a national grant program will help 41 schools increase parents' awareness and the number of students participating in free school breakfast programs this year by as many as 20,000 nationally.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.ActionForHealthyKids.org or call (800) 416-5136.