

Poor Nutrition And Inactivity May Affect Achievement, Cost Schools

(NAPSA)—According to a new report, there is a growing body of evidence that poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems can negatively affect student achievement.

“The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools” was released by the non-profit Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK). It indicates that schools may be losing significant funding each year due to the problems associated with these factors.

“Schools have the unique opportunity—even the responsibility—to teach and model healthful eating and physical activity, both in theory and in practice. Improving children’s health likely improves school performance, and it may even help a school’s bottom line,” said former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher, AFHK Founding Chair.

The report also found:

- Schools with high percentages of students who did not routinely engage in physical activity or eat well had smaller gains in test scores than did other schools.

- Children not getting adequate nutrients have lower test scores, increased absenteeism, difficulty concentrating and lower energy levels.

- Physical activity programs are linked to stronger academic achievement, increased concentration, and improved math, reading and writing test scores.

- Students participating in daily physical education exhibit better attendance, a more positive attitude to school, and superior academic performance.

Student absences resulting from poor nutrition and physical inactivity can have financial consequences for school districts, as well.

For example, in states that use attendance to help determine



Physical activity and good nutrition can positively impact a child’s performance in school, according to a new report.

state funding, a single-day absence by just one student can cost a school district anywhere from \$9 to \$20. If such health problems kept children out of school just one day per month, this could cost a large school district like New York about \$28 million each year, while Chicago would forfeit about \$9 million each year in state funds.

Schools also may incur hidden costs, such as extra staff time and attention devoted to students with low academic performance or behavior problems caused by poor nutrition and physical inactivity. Staff time is also required to dispense medications.

Action for Healthy Kids suggests schools need to include daily physical activity, provide health and physical education, and offer more after-school programs that provide nutritious snacks, physical activity and nutrition education.

According to the organization’s Executive Director Alicia Moag-Stahlberg, MS, RD, “The good news is that schools do not have to do this alone. There are community partners willing to collaborate to help find and implement solutions.”

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.actionforhealthykids.org.