

Physical Education Teachers/ Coaches



Athletic and sports teams have always been a part of the school experience. Today, it is not just the traditional sports of football, basketball, baseball and track. Gymnastics, soccer, volleyball, wrestling, tennis and golf are often part of school athletics even at elementary levels. Without proper training, your athletes will lack the skills to excel. Similarly, without proper nutrition, athletes lack the ability to perform at their peak levels during practice and competition. By eating a nutritious meal or snack at the right time, they will have the needed energy to perform with precision.

School breakfast is important to you, as a physical education teacher or coach. Not only are you developing positive habits in your athletes; you are also preparing their bodies for optimum performance. Studies have shown that attentiveness and cognitive functions improve when children have eaten breakfast. Your athlete's ability to succeed improves as a result of eating breakfast.

Academic performance is just as important as the ability to perform on the field, court or gymnasium. In most schools, an athlete must be a successful student to compete on school teams. Schools often have strict criteria for student athletes, such as attendance standards or grade point average minimums. Coaches must be concerned about their athletes' academic success as much as their athletic abilities.

Physical education teachers and coaches have an important role in a student's academic experience. You are more than educator and coach. In this section, you will see how important it is to be a role model for your athletes and how the School Breakfast Program can help them achieve their goals. Cited studies reinforce the importance of breakfast to academic performance and consequently to school sports. Your support can contribute to the success of the School Breakfast Program and the success of the athletes.

School Breakfast = Improved Academics = Optimal Performance

“Students who ate school breakfast often had math grades that averaged almost a letter grade higher than students who ate school breakfast rarely.”

-- *Pediatrics*, Vol. 101 No.1, January 1998

School breakfast resulted in:

- **Increased math and reading scores**
- **Fewer nurse's office visits**
- **Improved classroom behavior**
- **Improved attentiveness reported by teachers**
- **Improved performance reported by parents**

Minnesota Dept. of Children, Families and Learning & University of Minnesota
“School Breakfast Programs/Energizing the Classroom”
<http://cfl.state.mn.us/energize.pdf>

“Children in the School Breakfast Program were shown to have significantly higher standardized achievement test scores than eligible non-participants.”

-- Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy, 1998

School breakfast resulted in significant:

- **Increases in math grades**
- **Decreases in student absences and tardiness**
- **Decreases in ratings of psychosocial problems**

Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School
“The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial & Academic Functioning”
<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org> (search “past issues” for 1998 vol. 152 no. 9)

“Children who ate breakfast at school scored notably higher on most of the tests than children who ate breakfast at home and children who did not eat breakfast.”

-- Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, October, 1996

School Breakfast Tips for Physical Education Teachers and Coaches

Physical education teachers and coaches can help their athletes reach their optimal performance by supporting the School Breakfast Program. Your support can really make the difference on the field or courts and academically. Here are a few ways you can help:

- ❑ **HOLD TEAM MEETINGS OVER BREAKFAST BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS**

If the team has to meet to discuss strategy, attire and/or travel plans, provide breakfast at a special team table.

Host a free breakfast for athletes during homecoming week or before the big game of the season for each sports team.

- ❑ **STRESS THE NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF EATING BREAKFAST ON PERFORMANCE**

Athletes need nutritionally balanced meals to prepare for games, meets or tournaments. Emphasize the importance of preparation and eating foods that will provide sustained energy rather than sugar-loaded foods with no staying power.

Eating breakfast is important for sustained performance. It contributes to the balanced energy needed to last through after-school practices.

Breakfast provides $\frac{1}{4}$ of the athlete's daily requirement of nutrients.

- ❑ **EDUCATE ATHLETES ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST**

School Breakfast = Improved Academics = Optimal Performance

Students who eat breakfast have academic success and improved levels of attendance and tardiness. Without good grades, students may not be allowed to participate.

With good grades, students can focus better at practice and the game.

- ❑ **ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO SEND ATHLETES TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST**

Parents want their child to excel in all they attempt. Show them the benefits of eating breakfast and the improved academic and physical performance.

- ❑ **ENCOURAGE PRINCIPALS/SUPERINTENDENTS/SCHOOL BOARDS TO OFFER THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM**

Support the implementation of the program and offer to help increase participation by sending the team to breakfast every morning.