



Healthy Students Are Better Students: Report Illustrates "The Wellness Impact" Of Good Nutrition And Physical Activity On Improving Academic Achievement

ROSEMONT, Ill., March 4, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- As schools prepare for standardized testing this spring, school leaders, teachers and parents are focused on ensuring students are prepared to do their best. Research shows that regular access to better nutrition — starting with breakfast — coupled with increased opportunities for physical activity may help students reach their potential throughout the school year, which may lead to better performance at testing time and beyond.

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A report issued today, *The Wellness Impact: Enhancing Academic Success Through Healthy School Environments*,¹ reinforces the "learning connection" — the crucial link between quality nutrition, physical activity and academic performance. The report was released by the GENYOUth Foundation, National Dairy Council (NDC), the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the American School Health Association (ASHA).

Research on physical activity and obesity sheds new light on this learning connection. "Brain imaging shows that children experience improved cognitive function and higher academic achievement after just 20 minutes of physical activity," said Dr. Charles Hillman of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "Combining the many benefits of physical activity with good nutrition habits that support healthy weight can have a powerful impact on a child's potential to learn."

Other findings in *The Wellness Impact: Enhancing Academic Success Through Healthy School Environments* suggest:

- More than half (62%) of all teens say they do not eat breakfast every day of the week.²
- Breakfast eaters have better attention and memory than breakfast skippers.³
- Three-in-four high school students aren't active for the recommended 60 minutes each day.²
- Students who were more active during school performed better on standardized tests for reading, math and spelling.⁴

"Poor nutrition, inactivity and unhealthy weight not only lead to poor academic achievement in children, but also create hard costs for individuals, schools and society at large," said Dr. David Satcher, 16th U.S. Surgeon General and director of The Satcher Health Leadership Institute. "These costs include spiraling

health-care expenses, lower productivity and a future workforce unprepared for success. We must find solutions to improve nutrition and physical activity for our society's future well-being — and it must start in our homes and schools."

"With American kids spending 2,000 hours in school each year, we know in-school wellness policies can help build healthy habits and minds," added Jean H. Ragalie, RD , president of National Dairy Council. "Breakfast is a key place to start. School breakfast programs offering nutrient-rich foods — such as low-fat and fat-free dairy, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and lean proteins — may be just as important as books in impacting children's learning positively."

Across the U.S., schools face tremendous challenges to meet economic, health and academic demands. Many schools lack the funds to execute school wellness policies or to start breakfast programs. And as pressures mount to improve standardized test scores, many districts are shortening or eliminating opportunities for physical activity, such as recess and physical education (PE) classes. Proven school wellness programs such as Fuel Up to Play 60 — a program founded by National Dairy Council and the National Football League (NFL), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) — encourages students to take charge in making small, everyday changes toward a healthy lifestyle at school. In partnership with GENYOUth, Fuel Up to Play 60 has provided schools with more than \$10 million in grants to help develop healthy in-school initiatives ranging from breakfast programs to walking clubs. Administrators and teachers have shared success stories indicating improved attention spans and increased attendance as a result of participating in Fuel Up to Play 60.

"We know schools are the focal point in the movement to improve child health and wellness, but they cannot act alone. We are calling on the broader community, including business leaders, food and beverage companies, health professionals, community organizers, parents and students to help challenge the status quo by creating and sustaining opportunities for good nutrition and physical activity in schools," said Alexis Glick , CEO of GENYOUth. "We now have a better understanding than ever of the relationship between nutrition and physical activity and academic performance. This knowledge should motivate all of us to do everything in our power to create meaningful change for youth in schools." In addition to the efforts of GENYOUth, NDC, ACSM and ASHA, leaders in the child health and wellness arena including the new [Let's Move! Active Schools](#) initiative and [Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign](#), which is fighting to end childhood hunger, are taking action on the learning connection to advance students' health, well-being and academic achievement.

Everyone from community leaders to parents can work together to champion for improved child health and wellness in schools. To read the full report and get involved, visit www.GENYOUthFoundation.org.

About GENYOUth Foundation

Over the past thirty years, we have seen explosive growth in the number of children identified as overweight or obese. Founded through an unprecedented public-private partnership with the National Dairy Council (NDC) and the National Football League (NFL) committed to child health and wellness, GENYOUth brings leaders in health, education, government and business together in a movement to reverse childhood obesity rates. The Foundation officially launched on February 4, 2011 at Super Bowl XLV with the signing of a historic six-way Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with U.S. Departments

of Agriculture, Education and Health & Human Services. GENYOUth empowers students to improve nutrition and physical activity by taking small steps to accelerate a lifetime of healthy changes. When youth are given a voice, change can happen. For more information, visit www.GENYOUthFoundation.org.

About National Dairy Council

National Dairy Council® (NDC), the non-profit organization founded by dairy farmers, is committed to nutrition education and research-based communications. NDC provides science-based nutrition information to, and in collaboration with, a variety of stakeholders committed to fostering a healthier nation, including health professionals, educators, school nutrition directors, academia, industry, consumers and media. Established in 1915, NDC comprises a staff of registered dietitians and nutrition research and communications experts across the country. NDC has taken a leadership role in promoting child health and wellness through programs such as Fuel Up to Play 60. Developed by NDC and the National Football League (NFL), Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. For more information, visit www.NationalDairyCouncil.org.

About the American College of Sports Medicine

The American College of Sports Medicine is the largest sports medicine and exercise science organization in the world. More than 45,000 international, national and regional members and certified professionals are dedicated to advancing and integrating scientific research to provide educational and practical applications of exercise science and sports medicine. ACSM's signature programs include: **Exercise is Medicine®** A global initiative to improve health and well-being through a prescription for regular physical activity from doctors and other health care providers. **ACSM American Fitness Index™** An evidence- and science-based measurement of health and fitness at the community level throughout the U.S. in partnership with the WellPoint Foundation.

About The American School Health Association

The American School Health Association (ASHA) is the leading membership organization for school health professionals. ASHA's mission is to build the capacity of its members to plan, develop, coordinate, implement, evaluate, and advocate for effective school health strategies that contribute to optimal health and academic outcomes for all children and youth. We envision healthy students who learn and achieve in safe and healthy environments nurtured by caring adults functioning within coordinated school and community support systems (ashaweb.org).

About Fuel Up to Play 60

Fuel Up to Play 60 is an in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by National Dairy Council (NDC) and National Football League (NFL), with additional partnership support from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods (low-fat and fat-free dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains) and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Fuel Up to Play 60 is designed to engage and empower youth to take action for their own health by implementing long-term, positive changes for themselves and their schools. Customizable

and non-prescriptive program components are grounded in research with youth, including tools and resources, in-school promotional materials, a website and student challenges. Fuel Up to Play 60 is further supported by several health and nutrition organizations: Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition Association. Visit www.FuelUpToPlay60.com to learn more.

References

- 1 American College of Sports Medicine, American School Health Association, GENYOUth Foundation, National Dairy Council, *The Wellness Impact: Enhancing Academic Through Healthy School Environment*, March 2013.
- 2 Eaton DK, Kann L, Kinchen S, et al. 2012. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States 2011, Surveillance Summary No. 61(SS04);1-162. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6104a1.htm>. Accessed on January 31, 2013.
- 3 Wesnes KA, Pincock C, Richardson D, et al. Breakfast reduces declines in attention and memory over the morning in school children. *Appetite*. 2003;41:329-331.
- 4 Donnelly JE, Greene JL, Gibson CA, et al. Physical Activity Across the Curriculum (PAAC): A randomized controlled trial to promote physical activity and diminish overweight and obesity in elementary school children. *Preventive Medicine*. 2009;49(4):336–341.

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