



HEALTH AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GO HAND-IN-HAND

There is a clear connection between health, attendance and student achievement. Active, well-nourished children have better attendance, stay in school and are ready to learn and succeed.

1. Health care is key

Children who are ill or in pain can't concentrate on -- and succeed in -- school. Regular physical and oral checkups and timely care are important for academic achievement, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is bringing children and families new options for affordable, quality health coverage, immunizations and preventive services. Parents with uninsured or underinsured children can find out more about new, affordable health care options from Covered California to keep their kids succeeding in school, health and life.



2. Nutrition keeps children growing and learning

PTA launched United States schools' hot-and-healthy lunch programs 100 years ago because -- even back then -- the connection between nutrition and achievement was clear. Today's parents can help children reinforce healthy behaviors that last a lifetime by choosing a variety of nutrient-rich foods as the foundation of what they eat, not just at lunch at school but throughout the day. And take time -- as frequently as possible -- to eat together. Children who eat with their families regularly tend to eat healthier and have better nutritional status than those who do not. Family meals also are linked to improved language skills, better academic performance and a reduced risk of substance abuse and behavioral issues.

3. Active children have active minds

A significant body of research links regular physical activity with improved academic performance. Active play for 60 minutes a day improves students' brain functions, concentration, memory, overall grades and performance on standardized tests. Activity can happen anywhere -- in the classroom, the gymnasium, even outside of school. Take a walk as a family or play tag together: The brain-boosting benefits of physical activity are not limited to children, and parents can set healthy examples for their children.

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4. Kids can't learn -- and succeed -- if they're not at school

Chronic absenteeism — missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason, excused or unexcused — is a proven early warning sign of academic risk and school dropout. According to the National Collaborative on Education and Health, while the causes of chronic absenteeism are multi-fold, research shows that student health issues are a leading contributor. These health issues include physical, mental, behavioral, vision, dental, social and emotional health issues in addition to issues connected to a child's surrounding environment such as violence, housing insecurity and food insecurity. As a result, ensuring that students are healthy and attending school is a critical strategy for addressing chronic absenteeism -- and for ensuring student success.

5. Family engagement makes a difference

Parents' involvement in children's lives has been shown to reduce children's health-risk behaviors, improve their attitudes toward school and learning, and improve academic achievement and student success. With recent changes to how schools are funded, every school district in California must develop a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that describes how it will use funds to improve student achievement. Parents, community leaders, and students themselves have the opportunity to get engaged to set priorities and guide local decision making – including looking at what schools are doing to keep kids healthy and safe. Parents and community leaders can participate in a school health advisory committee and evaluate the school wellness policy on a regular basis.

For more back-to-school tips for parents and information on the importance of family engagement, visit www.capta.org. For more information about the work PTA is doing in schools and communities to promote effective health-education programs that support skill-building in children, youth and families to make healthy choices, parents and educators can sign up for California State PTA's free health newsletter at capta.org.