



REPORT  
BRIEF FOR  
DAIRY  
PRODUCERS



# The Wellness Impact:

## Enhancing Academic Success through Healthy School Environments



*The Wellness Impact* addresses why schools play a more important role than ever in helping forge the nation's future. The report illuminates the vital importance of improved nutrition, including low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, and increased physical activity in creating a school environment that enhances students' readiness to learn. This report brief provides highlights and key action steps of interest to dairy producers, since many of the report's messages are directly relevant to your concerns about the health and well-being of American students.

### National Dairy Council: A Leader In Children's Health And Wellness

National Dairy Council (NDC) is committed to child nutrition, health and wellness and is intent on making sure future generations are well-nourished. Established by dairy producers in 1915 and approaching its 100th anniversary, National Dairy Council has taken a leadership role in promoting child health and wellness through programs such as Fuel Up to Play 60 (see page 3). GENYOUth, which was founded in partnership with NDC and the NFL around a shared commitment to child health and wellness, educates students, schools, communities, business partners and thought leaders about the role of nutrition, including the importance of breakfast and daily physical activity for youth. On September 18-19, 2012, GENYOUth, along with National Dairy Council, American College of Sports Medicine and American School Health Association, brought together thought leaders and corporations to explore the connection between physical activity and nutrition on learning and behavior.

For a copy of the complete report, visit [www.GENYOUthNow.org](http://www.GENYOUthNow.org).

## Key Takeaways from This Report

**IT'S ALL ABOUT SCHOOLS.** Schools are key to widespread student wellness, which makes their role in a healthy future for students an important one.

**THE PROOF IS IN THE BRAIN.** New research into how kids' brains are affected by nutrition and physical activity is strengthening the learning connection, which is the idea that improved nutrition and physical activity *directly affect learning*.

**PAYING THE PRICE.** The costs of ignoring school wellness take many forms. Costs to kids may include poor academic achievement and reduced career prospects. Costs to schools may include high absenteeism and lower test scores. Costs to society may include higher healthcare expenses and an unprepared workforce. Yet creating health-promoting school environments is an opportunity to reduce all these costs.

**HOW'S YOUR SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY?** School wellness policies are mandated by federal law; however, policy implementation and enforcement varies. Some districts align with national recommendations, some barely align and many don't align at all. Now is a great time to find out about your local school's wellness policy — and to see how you can help put it into practice.

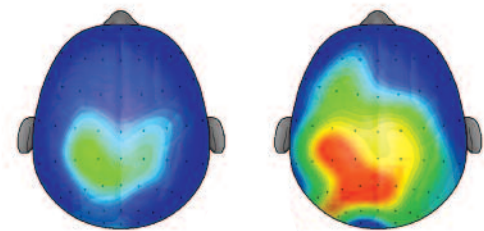
**CULTURES OF WELLNESS ARE ACHIEVABLE.** Schools nationwide are overcoming barriers every day to achieve healthy school environments. Right now what's important is accelerating the progress already made toward healthier schools by taking specific action. The good news is that community voices and actions matter!

## AMAZING IMAGES

Research indicates that cognition is impacted by the quality of foods kids eat and by physical activity. Brain-imaging, a tool in the field of neuroscience, is helping us understand these connections better than ever before. The images here represent the work of Dr. Charles Hillman of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who is focusing on the relationship between physical activity and children's attention, memory and academic performance.

### Cognitive Effects of Exercise in Preadolescent Children

Average composite of 20 students' brains taking the same test after sitting quietly or taking a 20-minute walk:



After 20 minutes of Sitting Quietly

After 20 minutes of Walking

Reprinted with permission of Dr. C. H. Hillman.

With the help of neuroimaging, we're learning that:

- \* Physical fitness may benefit cognition and brain health as well as academic performance.
- \* Early physical activity experiences may shape the brain and its functions.

Physical activity may positively impact students' academic performance, *whether it comes during PE class, recess, in the classroom or before/after school.*

## SCHOOL BREAKFAST: SMALL STEP, BIG IMPACT

Do your local schools provide breakfast? School breakfast is an easy, obvious, cost-effective step to improving school and student wellness. Whether served in the cafeteria, in the classroom or grab 'n' go style, children who eat school breakfast...

- \* Are better able to learn
- \* Achieve higher test scores
- \* Are less likely to be absent from school
- \* Behave better in school

Plus, breakfast makes economic sense. School breakfast programs have been shown to have serious revenue-producing potential, even more so than school lunch, especially when schools with high numbers of free and reduced-price eligible students begin offering it. *See full report, Section 2, for references.*

## Food Insecurity: Hunger Hinders Learning

Far too many American children are food insecure. Paradoxically, food insecurity is linked with obesity, and it also increases vulnerability to short- and long-term consequences for health, well-being and achievement. Approximately 16.6 million children lived in food insecure households in 2011. That's 22.4 percent of the nation's children. Part of the answer to this issue is broadening participation in and quality of the federal free and reduced-price school meal programs (i.e., breakfast, lunch, after school and summer), but especially school breakfast, which is severely underutilized. These programs are an effective, logical means of promoting healthful diets and contributing to a reversal of the current childhood obesity epidemic — especially given their reach in schools and communities across the country, and particularly among vulnerable low-income and food-insecure children.

**IT'S A REALITY.** Many youth aren't getting all of the nutrients or the amount of physical activity they need, which some research suggests may affect their ability to learn and achieve academically. Schools can help by creating health-promoting environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice for students. **The bottom line: Healthy students are better students.**

## PROVEN RESULTS!

Developed by National Dairy Council and the National Football League (NFL) in cooperation with the U.S. Department



[www.FuelUpToPlay60.com](http://www.FuelUpToPlay60.com)

of Agriculture, Fuel Up to Play 60 is an in-school program designed to engage and empower youth to take action for their own health by implementing long-term, positive changes for themselves and their schools. Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages students to “get active and play” for 60 minutes daily and “fuel up” with nutrient-rich foods like low-fat and fat-free milk and dairy foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Fuel Up to Play 60 has grown to be the largest health and wellness program in schools across the country and is currently active in nearly 73,000 schools, with a potential reach of 38 million students. Schools across the country are reporting that the program is an engine for positive change, helping them achieve their wellness goals.

- > 70% of educators believe the program is helping students make healthier food choices.
- > 66% of educators believe the program is increasing opportunities for students to be physically active in school.
- > 65% of educators say the program helps them achieve their school wellness goals.

## STUDENTS CAN BE LEADERS!

We sometimes forget that students are often their own best advocates for improved nutrition and greater physical activity. Fuel Up to Play 60 gives students a leadership role in creating a healthier school and in promoting healthy eating and physical activity choices for themselves and their peers.

*Kids need options. It's true of eating and it's also true of gym class. We have to find the fun in something and do what we like to do.* JULIANNA, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT, NEW JERSEY\*

*When it comes to getting kids moving, I'd want to involve the community and neighbors more in what we're doing at school. Everyone should be able to use the space and equipment we have around our school, not just students.*

ALEJANDRO, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT, ILLINOIS\*

\*Julianna and Alejandro are just two of the thousands of students who serve as **Fuel Up to Play 60 Student Ambassadors** in their schools. They both took part in the 2012 GENYOUth Nutrition + Physical Activity Learning Connection Summit in Washington, D.C.

## Dairy Professionals Can Help Support Fuel Up to Play 60 by Spreading the Word!

You can make a difference in the health of students and schools in your community. As critical participants in the discussion, it's important for dairy producers and other professionals in the dairy industry to spread the Fuel Up to Play 60 message to encourage change and support healthy schools and healthy students!

### Here's how you can get involved:

- > Visit the Fuel Up to Play 60 Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/FuelUpToPlay60](http://www.facebook.com/FuelUpToPlay60)) and see what Fuel Up to Play 60 fans are talking about.
- > Enroll in the program, log in and make sure the school(s) you support are enrolled and that each one has a Program Advisor. If your local school doesn't have one, visit the school and offer to help support one or more adults willing to take on that role.
- > Work with parents and parent organizations and get them involved in the program. Share the goals and strategies of Fuel Up to Play 60 with community organizations and businesses. Solicit volunteers or resources to support the program's goals.
- > Encourage local students to become Fuel Up to Play 60 Student Ambassadors and to apply for roles as local, state or national Student Ambassadors (<http://students.fueluptoplay60.com/StudentAmbassador/About>).
- > Share your expertise. Find out about your school district's wellness practices. Contact school leaders and offer to help implement school wellness goals in ways that tap your knowledge and expertise.
- > Be a role model. Encourage employee wellness initiatives and practices in your own organization.
- > Check out the program's Playbook of ideas (<http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/playbook/>), which includes “Plays” that highlight dairy farming:
  - **From Farm to School: Farms Deliver** – <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/playbook/play.php?id=25647033>
  - **From Farm to School: Know Your Foods** – <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/playbook/play.php?id=25647028>



### About GENYOUth

Founded through an unprecedented public-private partnership with the National Dairy Council (NDC) and the National Football League (NFL) and 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 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.GENYOUthNow.org](http://www.GENYOUthNow.org).

### About National Dairy Council

Established in 1915, National Dairy Council® (NDC), the nonprofit organization funded by the national dairy checkoff program, 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. For more information, visit [www.NationalDairyCouncil.org](http://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.org](http://acsm.org)).

### 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](http://ashaweb.org)).

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## Resources That Can Help

*Many organizations and government agencies provide resources that can help schools — and parents — create healthy changes in their district or school. Here are just a few.*

### Fuel Up to Play 60

(NFL and National Dairy Council)  
[www.FuelUpToPlay60.com](http://www.FuelUpToPlay60.com)

### Breakfast in the Classroom Toolkit

(School Nutrition Foundation)  
<http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/SNF/BIC/>

### Let's Move!

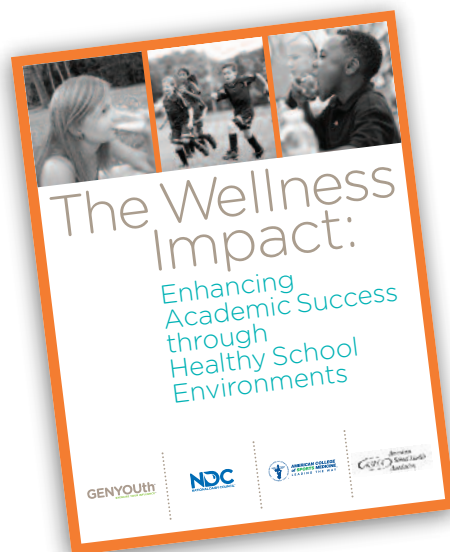
(launched by First Lady Michelle Obama)  
[www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)

### Wellness Policy Tool

(Action for Healthy Kids)  
[www.actionforhealthykids.org/for-schools/resources/tools/wellness-policy-tool.html](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/for-schools/resources/tools/wellness-policy-tool.html)

### MyPlate Guidance and Tools

(U.S. Department of Agriculture)  
[www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)



For a copy of the complete report —including references and other supporting materials — visit [www.GENYOUthNow.org](http://www.GENYOUthNow.org).



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