## Your Grades Are What You Eat

**Advisory Goal:** Students will increase their academic success through the monitoring of attendance, grades and discipline issues.

**Purpose:** Students will become aware of how their nutritional habits affect their academic performance.

**Time:** One advisory period.

**Materials:** 1. Paper and writing utensil for each student.

2. The Value of Nutrition information sheet. Once they have their list, instruct them to circle all of the foods they would consider to be healthy and underline the unhealthy foods they have eaten

**Preparation:**

1. Have students write down what they have eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the past 3 days.
2. Once they have their list, instruct them to circle all of the foods they would consider to be healthy and underline the unhealthy foods they have eaten.

**Activity:**

1. Discuss with your students what is considered healthy vs. unhealthy food.
2. Read the information provided from The Value of Nutrition to your students.
3. Ask “How does your diet affect your performance in school?”
4. Encourage your students to keep track of everything they eat for the next week and see if anyone wants to share at the beginning of the next weeks advisory.

**Reflection:** Ask the students:

* Did you enjoy this activity?
* Would you like to see more activities such as this one?

**Reflection:** Ask the teacher:

* Was the time appropriate for the activity?
* Did you have all the materials you needed, should other be listed?
* Did the students take part?
* Did the students seem to enjoy and/or get the purpose of the activity?

**The Value of Nutrition**

Studies by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other organizations have found that a child's poor eating habits could lead to a variety problems with energy, focus, mood and concentration, as well as directly impair that child's capacity to learn. Medical experts also associate undernourishment with reduced activity levels, social interactions and curiosity. In addition, undernourished children have been found to experience difficulty fighting off infections, causing them to fall ill more frequently, miss more days of class and struggle harder to catch up with the rest of the class.

Nutrients

While all nutrients are vital for good health, some are especially important for a child's development and learning. Iron is needed for healthy brain growth and a deficiency can result in delayed development, reports the University of Mississippi. Iodine is a nutrient that many people don't think about, but not getting enough during the school years can reduce cognition among children, which hinders classroom comprehension and performance. Protein is needed for a child to grow at a healthy rate, and vitamins A and C support immunity, keeping a child well enough to get to school each day, which optimizes learning opportunities. Calcium is important to healthy bone growth and omega-3 fatty acids help a child's brain develop. A well-balanced diet ensures that children are getting adequate amounts of the nutrients they need to learn and develop.

Brain Benefits

Students who eat breakfast have better concentration during school hours than students who skip the morning meal. According to pediatrician Dr. William Sears, children who eat breakfast also participate more in class discussions, are better able to handle complex problems in class and get better grades. In particular, a breakfast meal containing a balance of protein and complex carbohydrates boosts school performance for the remainder of the day.