



# FUEL for SCHOOLS

Autumn 2023 • Nutrition News & Activities from your Gonzales ISD Food Service Dept.

## Eating for Academic Success

Students who eat a healthy diet fuel both their body and their brain. Below are three important ways that proper nutrition leads to improved classroom performance.

1. Eating breakfast jump starts the brain! Brain cells need a constant supply of energy for optimal function. When children and teens eat a balanced breakfast, they are better able to think, concentrate, learn and even score higher on standardized tests.
2. Focus on iron-rich foods. Students with poor diets are at risk of low iron stores or even iron-deficiency anemia. Healthy iron stores contribute to brain function and problem solving skills.
3. Skip the meal skipping. Three balanced meals and an afternoon snack maintain blood sugar levels throughout the day, supplying the brain with the energy needed to think, focus and concentrate. The best brain-boosting meals and snacks include a source of protein, a whole grain and a fruit or vegetable.

**Q. Is it true that fish is brain food?**

**A. Yes!**

Fish, especially fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, tuna, herring and anchovies have Omega-3 fatty acids, which are an important component of brain cells. Eating seafood on a regular basis contributes to a healthy brain. Aim for two seafood meals each week.



## Nutrition Know-How

### Pump up Your Iron Stores!

Iron is an important nutrient because it carries oxygen throughout the body. Best known for its role in blood, iron is part of the hemoglobin which makes up red blood cells. When iron stores are low, red blood cells lose their capacity to deliver oxygen to all body cells. This can affect energy level, brain function and learning. Iron-deficiency anemia is most common in young children and teen girls.

The best food sources of iron are lean meat, fish, poultry and eggs. They contain a form of iron

known as **heme** iron, which is easily absorbed by the body.



**Non-heme** sources of iron are found in soybeans (including tofu), lima beans, almonds, peanut butter, dried apricots, raisins, spinach, potato, peas, winter squash and fortified cereals.

Vitamin C enhances the absorption of non-heme iron. To get the most iron from plant-based foods, include a vitamin C source such as citrus, broccoli, kiwi, strawberries, peppers or potatoes with meals and snacks.

Learn more about iron by visiting <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-Consumer/>.



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## Take Five for Fitness

### Make an Indoor Fitness Course

As fall sets in and the days get dark, an indoor fitness course can keep you moving and fit. A garage, basement or even the living room can be set up for fitness fun. Below are a few inexpensive ideas and resources to check out.

- Set out canned goods to use for hand weights.
- Save bubble wrap from packaging and entice kids to jump by popping the bubbles.
- Turn a large box into a tunnel to scoot through.
- Get cardio in place with marching, jumping jacks, jumping rope, dance, spinning a hula hoop or other creative movement.

For more ideas, check out the following:

1. <https://www.care.com/c/fun-indoor-exercises-for-school-aged-kids/>
2. <https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/indoor-and-at-home-exercises-for-kids>
3. <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/8-indoor-activities-to-release-kids-energy>

## Fruit & Veggie Spotlight: Bananas and Kale

### Bananas

Go bananas for this healthy fruit!

Available year-round, bananas are low-cost, versatile,

portable and delicious. Bananas are a good source of fiber, potassium and vitamin B6. They are a great addition to baked goods, smoothies, yogurt and cereal. Bananas pair well with peanut and other nut butters for an energizing afternoon snack.

Create a "banana sandwich" by cutting a peeled banana in half (lengthwise), spread your favorite



nut butter on one half and reattach the other piece to form a whole. Eat and enjoy!

For more on bananas, including some delicious recipes, visit the following links:

<https://tinyurl.com/mrytrjvt> (English)

<https://tinyurl.com/57sy9jha> (Spanish)

### Kale

Kale often tops the list of healthy vegetables. It is a nutritional superstar which provides ample amounts of vitamins K, A, and C, numerous trace minerals and important antioxidants, including eye-boosting lutein and zeaxanthin. Kale is also extremely versatile and can be chopped and added to sauces, soups and casseroles, eaten raw in salads, blended into smoothies and even roasted into chips. For more on using and storing kale visit the following links:



<https://tinyurl.com/yz7upkx3> (English)

<https://tinyurl.com/yc7mmekb> (Spanish)

### Kid-Approved Kale Dip



Try this yummy kale dip from Food Hero. Delicious with a bit of a spice kick, it will entice kids to add more veggies to their diet.

<https://foodhero.org/recipes/kale-dip>