

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Key Elements for Thinking and Learning

By Harvey Lee

Elementary and secondary health education is increasingly important for students to reach the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). According to Julie Stauss in her 2002 article “Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment” in *The State Education Standard*, “children’s health and nutritional status affect their ability to learn.”

One of the building blocks for thinking and learning is glucose. Fruits and vegetables are key sources of glucose, enhancing performance and accuracy, according to David Sousa in his 2001 book *How the Brain Works*. Replacing chips and cookies at morning break with vegetables and fruits will replenish students’ glucose levels. It is very important for children and parents to get up early enough to have a good fruit or whole grain cereal breakfast at home or at school. Eating a healthful breakfast produces the needed glucose for morning classes.

Other key elements for thinking and learning are water and oxygen. A thirsty brain impedes the neuron signals. The brain needs water to speed up the passing of information through the neurons. Water moistens the lungs increasing the flow of oxygen to the red blood cells allowing the brain to have a maximum flow of oxygen. During the day, it is important for children to drink one eight-ounce glass of water for every 25 pounds of body weight in order to achieve peak performance according to Sousa.

Turning off the television at night is as critical as eating right or drinking water. Children need a good night’s sleep to get ready for the next day.

It is important for us to remember the basic human development of children. As the children’s bodies continue to grow and mature, parents and teachers need to ensure children get key elements such as glucose from healthy foods, water to increase oxygen levels, and enough sleep to rejuvenate their bodies.

If your parent group would like a workshop on understanding the brain and learning, contact Harvey Lee at leeh@prel.org or 808-441-1309.

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