



Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind

Engage for Energy and Focus

#5 Nutrition and Wellness

Physical, mental, and emotional health support engagement and learning.

People living in poverty are less likely to exercise, get proper diagnosis of health problems, receive appropriate and prompt medical attention, or be prescribed appropriate medications or interventions.

Poor nutrition at breakfast affects gray-matter mass in kids' brains.

The two most important fuels for the brain are oxygen and glucose. To get a supply of glucose to the brain, kids ideally should eat either a high-protein breakfast including, for example, lean meats, eggs, or yogurt, or one that includes complex carbohydrates, such as oatmeal.

Poor health and nutrition cannot be ignored; nor should they be used as an excuse for letting students underperform. Before you assume that poor nutrition is the irreparable cause of your students' unsatisfactory behavior or academic performance, consider this: thousands of teachers succeed with low-SES students who don't have ideal diets but who nevertheless demonstrate appropriate behavior and earn high achievement scores.

Creating a highly engaging classroom can help compensate for behavioral and cognitive issues resulting from poor nutrition.