

THE EFFECT OF A BREAKFAST-ORIENTED NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM ON FOOD INTAKE PATTERNS
AND ALERTNESS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

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Surveys show that as many as 50 per cent of children either have no breakfast or an inadequate breakfast (Coy 1975; Langelaan and Odgers 1976; Steel 1978). With decreasing socioeconomic status this figure increases (Campbell et al. 1978).

We investigated whether a 7-week nutrition education program could change eating patterns of children and whether alertness is affected by the program. 'Project Munch' (State College of Victoria, Rusden, and Victorian Dairy Industry Association) was the basis of the education program, and a free breakfast was provided at school for a test group of 27 seven- and eight-year-old children. A group of children of the same age served as controls. Alertness tests modified for this age group and the classroom from established psychological tests were used. Tests were undertaken before, during, and at the end of the program.

The following results were obtained.

1) <u>Digit Copying Test</u>		(Maximum Score = 60)		
	No.	Initial	Change Initial to Mid	Change Mid to End
Control group	27	20.78	+ 8.00	+ 1.77
Test group	27	21.48ns	+14.74***	- 1.44ns
2) <u>Numbers Forwards and Backwards Test</u>		(Maximum Score = 6)		
	No.	Initial	Change Initial to Mid	Change Mid to End
Control group	27	2.63	+ 0.26	+ 0.93
Test group	27	2.48ns	+ 0.77**	- 0.48ns
Group comparison T Test.		ns : p>0.05 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.001		

There was an overall net improvement in Digit Copying for the test group against the control group, but not for the Numbers Forwards and Backwards test. Not all of the early improvement in the test grade was maintained.

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