

WIC Improves Children's Educational Prospects

WIC — the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children — provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services for millions of low-income families. Extensive research shows that participating in WIC leads to healthier babies, more nutritious diets and better health care for children, and higher academic achievement for students.

- ▶ Poverty and related disadvantages in infancy and early childhood can **affect children's cognitive development and readiness to learn**, studies show, producing disparities in skills and academic achievement. These disparities may grow as children age.
- ▶ Sound investments that reduce adversity in early childhood can **strengthen the foundations of physical and mental health**, helping children do better in school and grow up to become healthier and more productive adults.
- ▶ WIC supports sound nutrition during critical periods of cognitive development to mitigate the harmful effects of poverty. New research shows that **children whose mothers participated in WIC while pregnant scored higher on assessments of mental development at age 2** than similar children whose mothers didn't participate.
- ▶ **The benefits of WIC participation lasted into the school years**, as children whose mothers participated in WIC while pregnant performed better on reading assessments and were less likely to repeat a grade.

