

# Exploratory paper

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Exploratory Paper-Revise English 1302/July 4th On-line Class 20 July 2011

UnhealthyFoodBanning From Schools Presently, children in Los Angeles

Schools are being denied chocolate milk due to an unhealthy food ban.

According to an L. A. Times article, chocolate milk being served in Los

Angeles public schools has as much sugar as a cup of regular Coke

(Macvean, par. 9). Such findings have resulted in chocolate milk, which

accounts for more than half of the milk consumed in Los Angeles public

schools, being banned on July 1, 2011.

So, why are Los Angeles Schools and other schools in the nation enforcing

unhealthy food bans? It is not surprising that Los Angeles and many school

districts in the country have been introducing strict bans on unhealthy foods

due to an alarming problem with childhood obesity. The problem became

more apparent when a national study conducted by the Federal Drug

Administration (FDA) found that one in three American children attending

public schools were reported to be obese (Chase, par. 7).

Most of the blame for the alarming ratio of student obesity was directed to "

Junk" foods and sedentary activity. In response, Los Angeles schools and

many other schools in the country have made it a mission to offer their

students healthier menus and encourage good eating habits largely by

banning food items that are deemed unhealthy. The crusade to ban

unhealthy foods from schools has had its fair share of critics, primarily by the

producers of the labeled snack and soda foods who argue that banning their

products will not solve the obesity problem that is currently affecting

children.

They claimed it is not their product, but the lack of exercise is the cause of obesity. In response to the obesity issue, producers such as Pepsi-Cola have generously provided large monetary donations to school physical education programs. School administrators and student organizations themselves have argued that food bans on snacks and sodas would create a financial burden for schools, and is the wrong way to target children's eating habits.

One major concern is that unhealthy food bans in schools will harm school fundraising efforts for sports programs and school bands that have relied on extra revenue from sodas and candy sales. According to an article in Education Week by Linda Jacobson, 30 percent of California high schools that generated income from such products each raised more than \$125,000 a year (23). Korey Capozza of Prevention magazine reported that the average teenager consumes almost two cans of soda per day that are usually purchased from a school vending machine (par. 1).

An average two soda consumption could generate thousands, or even millions of dollars in soda-company incentives to a school district's budget. A popular proponent of such policies that ban unhealthy food is political conservative icon Sarah Palin. While visiting a private school in Pennsylvania she made a clear point about where she stood on the matter: "are losing their rights for an occasional classroom treat" like her cookies. Her focus was to push for laissez-faire, which would prohibit any government controls on what children can and cannot eat at school.

Palin argued that government control on school foods is an assault on the American way of life, " On freedom and simple pleasures. On wholesome childhood delights and... the integrity of the family' Oudith, par. 2). Despite debate, the popular trend by local governments in dealing with childhood obesity continues to be the banning of unhealthy foods in schools under the idea that this will encourage schools to provide nutritional meals and teach children how to become healthy eaters.

To some degree, states like New York and California have a zero tolerance policy on unhealthy foods that can be sold or consumed on school premises. Both states also have extreme foods policies, which prohibit bake sales, treats given by teachers, and birthday cakes in the classrooms (Brown, par. 2). A public school in Chicago has even banned the lunches students bring from home unless they have a medical excuse ensuring they will only eat the food provided by the school cafeteria (Eng, par. 5). According to an article in CQ

Researcher, many studies have found that eating habits start at a young age and the author of the article, Alan Greenblatt, believes that because of this, schools can play an important role in combating obesity (73). Greenblatt added that food controls is not the only solution and cautions that children will more or less fill up on unhealthy food outside the school (75). He also purposed that unhealthy school food bans should also include an increase in physical exercise and education about eating healthy that will also involve the students' parents to encourage them to prepare healthy foods at home (Greenblatt 78).

The federal government has also lent its attention on the problem of childhood obesity and has supported state government efforts to ban unhealthy foods from schools so much so that in July of 2011, President Barrack Obama signed the child nutrition bill which places a national ban on selling candy, sugary soda, salty and fatty food in school snack bars, vending machines, and a la carte cafeteria lines (Severston, par. 1). This measure by the federal government has emphasized the argument that unhealthy food bans in schools are too intrusive and even go against American values.

The only clear conclusion in the debates involving child obesity is that something has to be done by somebody. Why not start teaching children to eat well in a place where they do most of their learning? For the fact schools are where children spend most of their time, and makes logical sense to lay the foundation for healthy habits there. It is also uncertain whether unhealthy foods on the long run will create financial difficulties for the schools or force student to eat those banned items outside of school.

Nevertheless, schools can probably generate extra revenues sales if vending machines are refitted with healthier alternatives, such as granola bars and water. This will also motivate the producers of "Junk foods" to provide and advertise healthier products to children. Hopefully a healthy eating trend among children and adolescents can start with no "Junk" food vending machines. As far as "laissez-faire" is concerned, I have no objection to the government showing concern about what our children eat in our schools and taking on the obesity problem head-on to help improve the quality of life in our society.