

Modifications to the national school lunch program menu making healthy students.

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..... Introduction Recent modifications

made to the National School Lunch Program menu have caused controversy

all across the nation. In last year The National School Lunch program have

been under scrutiny and major changes have been made to the ingredients

and preparation of school lunches. The USDA reports that the all the

modifications to the school lunches are focus towards improving the health

of all school age children, contributing to the fight against childhood obesity

and succinctly to improve the health of all children across the nation. This

research would explore the history of the different federal agencies involved in the national nutritional services, the most comprehensive changes in the school nutritional environment, the old and new menu choices and how changes are impacting students (National School Lunch Program, [NSLP] 2012). Research Statement According to the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service the recent changes to the National School Lunch program have been an important aid in the fight against childhood obesity and to help change student eating habits towards a healthier approach. In the last 4 years the Senate of the United States has proposed different legislative changes to the National School Lunch menu allowing millions of dollars to contribute towards a healthier approach modifying what student age children are consuming during school hours. The most comprehensive changes have been oriented towards reducing fat, sugar and sodium, and including more vegetables as part of the daily school cafeteria menu (United States Department of Agriculture, [USDA] 2012).

Initial Research Question How the recent changes to the national school lunch program can improve the student's health? By analyzing the recent changes to the national school lunch program we will be able to compare some of the differences between some of the new and improve school lunch menu and how these changes are impacting students across the nation.

Review of literature The National School Lunch Act was a law established under the administration of President Harry Truman in 1946. The original purpose of the act was to help local farmers with surplus produce and using these foods to feed school age children. After reviewing the principles of the act, members of the senate requested the establishment of a national

program that under the guidelines of the National School Lunch Act, would oversee all operations associated with school lunch meals, reason for the creation of the National School Lunch program. The National School lunch program manages one of the largest federally assisted meal programs that provides nutritionally balanced meals free or at low cost to school age children. The national school lunch program takes cash subsidies and foods provided by the U. S Department of Agriculture, in return the national school lunch program must meet nutritional federal requirements and most important must offer meals free or at low cost to all student age children. According to reported statistics from the U. S Department of Agriculture the National School Lunch feeds over 30 million students each day (NSLP, 2012) There is no doubt that the student nutrition subject has been an important topic of national concern in the history of our country. In 1966, The Child Nutrition Act was a law signed by President Lyndon B Johnson, encouraged by a national concern over nutrition in school age children. The Child Nutrition Act became to be an instrument to facilitate the process of meeting nutritional needs of children under the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program. The act also helped established the school based breakfast program providing free breakfast for children in public and nonprofit schools, during the signing of this act president Johnson use a famous phrase that would change forever the futures of national school lunches " Good food is essential to good learning" (USDA, 2012) U. S Department of Agriculture is a federal funded division who is responsible to all operations in the nation pertaining to farming agriculture and food. Better known as the USDA the department not only promotes and helps farming and agriculture issues but

ensures food safety across the nation. The USDA is one of the oldest federally department created by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. The USDA oversees a vast amount of operative units in the united states including the USDA Food and Nutritional Services who major goal is to provide healthy food to families in need, the department also collaborate closely with the National School Lunch program providing foods that are of nutritional value (USDA, 2012) On December 13th, 2010 President Obama sign into a law the Healthy, Hunger —Free Act of 2010. This act was creating to combat the alarming rates of childhood obesity cases in the U. S. The now law came to update the school meals standards who reflected very little changes in nutrition in the last 15 years, the HHFK Act also had an impact on the USDA, changing the foods providing to the National School lunch program and succinctly reflecting changes in meal nutritional standards in schools across the nation. In the 2009 a review from the Institute of Medicine recommended several updates to the National School lunch menus, the review found that the school cafeteria menus were not meeting the dietary guidelines for school age children stated by the U. S Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (Healthy Hunger-Free Act, [HHFA] 2012) In 2011 the USDA proposed new regulations based on the finding of the Institute of Medicine of the United States. The process of modification of the school cafeteria menus begin slowly but steady on schools across the nation, the changes included whole grain servings on all meals; reduce saturated fat sugar and sodium, and more fresh fruit and vegetables. Elizabeth Ippel, executive director of The Academy of Global Citizenship in Chicago, talks about the important of nutrition’s “ good nutrition is essential

and a very integral component to effective learning". The changes are significant and according to Mrs. Ippel the students are responding positive to the modifications (Leamy, 2012) Here's an example of a before and after lunch menu: Before After Breaded beef patty on a white roll Baked Fish Nuggets Fruit popsicle Whole wheat roll Low fat milk Mashed potatoes Broccoli Peaches Skim Milk Discussion On December 13, 2010 president Obama signed into law 111-296 the Healthy Hunger —Free Act of 2010. The act is one of the most comprehensive proposals in the school nutritional environment in over 15 years; the main goal of this law is to update school meals nutritional standards to help combat childhood obesity and help students achieve healthy eating habits. Beginning in July 2012 the new lunch meal pattern will be in effect changing what students will be consuming during lunch in the school year 2012-2013. The new proposed meal components includes key changes for children K and above, these changes requires that school lunches offer a daily variety of whole grains, fruit and vegetables. In the fruit category, each meal provided by school cafeterias must include ½ cup of fresh, frozen or canned fruits, prepared or compound with water and not syrup. ½ of vegetables on each meal is another requirement in the daily school lunch menus; the new regulations required a variety of vegetable groups including: dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy and other vegetables. On the area of whole grains, breads and cereals are required on each meal as long as the food item includes more than 8 grams of grains. The act has also limit the amount of flavored milks opting for only low fat milk during meals. Calories are also under a scope view limiting the calorie ranges according to age groups. Trans-fat is banned

completely from school cafeteria menus and the act has also a plan to limit sodium gradually over the next decade, to reach the goal of keeping sodium at a no more than 600 mg per meal, equal to a diet frozen meal (HHFKA, 2012). The changes in the cafeteria school menu are impacting students and teachers equally, besides of more nutritional value, the new menus now offered more quantity amounts of healthier foods, satisfying the hunger of millions of students and reflecting healthier attitudes in the classrooms. LuAnn Coenen from Appleton Central High School in Wisconsin cheers the new regulations in the cafeteria menus and states " Since the introductions of the new food program, I have noticed an enormous difference in the behavior of my students in the classroom, " "I can say without hesitation that it's changed my job as principal". It seems that less sugary foods and drinks are impacting student's behavior. An associate professor of education at the Lehigh university conducted a study of over 2000 lunchrooms across the nation, the conclusions indicated that healthier and less sugary meals carries a calmer atmosphere in the classroom this calmer demeanor is reflects when students go back to the classrooms creating a trickling effect. Taylor a student from Appleton High commented about the changes she felt since the cafeteria menus changed " I'd say being able to concentrate better". Susan Graham principal from Melrose Elementary in Tampa Florida confirms that her discipline referrals have decreased 50 % " We get a lot more done, I think it's a lot more efficient work environment for all of us, " Grahams said (abcnews, 2012). Berger (2005) wrote about the importance of a well balanced meal for the proper development of children's brain development, and how school meal programs played an important role in

children's brain development, by providing a well balanced meal while in school children can achieve proper brain development a subsequently their ability to learn will be maximized (Berger, 2005). The changes happening in schools cafeterias might seem insignificant, but replacing extra-cheese pizza, deep fried chicken for whole wheat pizza and baked fish nuggets, represent a huge step towards making students healthy. Some modifications to the school lunch menu have happened slowly and some hidden from students, like replacing full fat cheese with a low fat mozzarella cheese in the pizzas, as well as using whole wheat bread on grill cheese sandwiches. Dr. Saira Jan a Rutgers University Professor (2006) comments on children obesity and diabetes rising numbers " Kids choose from what they are offered. They are hungry, they will eat. You can offer carrots or French fries. We have a big health-care problem. We can't just talk about it" (Weekly Reader, 2006). Conclusion In conclusion the overall national concern over childhood obesity and the rising rate of diseases in children related to overweight issues is currently being addressed by different entities in charge of school nutrition. The National School lunch program has and will make modification on the students' lunch menu to feed students healthier foods in the effort to fight childhood obesity. Even though there has been mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the lunch menu modifications, the HHFKA guidelines demonstrate how

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