

Proposing a solution to a problem- childhood obesity



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CHILDHOOD OBESITY Childhood obesity is a serious problem in today's world. What is more important than the health of children? Their health is vital to our future. It is a commonly held belief that health is linked to environment, and because children spend a great deal of time in schools, it follows that the quality of their school environment and the things they do at school will have a great influence on their overall health. Although it is somewhat difficult to solve problems like bullying—problems children may face in the hurly burly of social interaction—it is quite possible to influence their health through nutrition and dietary policy. One major problem regarding children's health is the huge quantity of sugary and high calorie food that is available to them at school. Vending machines are not supervised so it is hard to stop children from eating or drinking as much of these types of food or drink as they want. And since children don't know what is best for them, this can often be a lot. A number of recent studies have shown the negative role vending machines play in children's health. Removing them from schools is a potential solution to this unfortunate problem.

Part of the reason why the issue of vending machines is on the radar these days is because obesity is becoming more and more of a problem in the United States. Obesity can lead to diseases like Type-2 Diabetes. According to Amy Virus, a registered dietitian, "[m]iddle schools students are at particular risk, because they are going through puberty, their physical activity and dietary habits are fluctuating . . ." (Colwell). It doesn't help that there is temptation around every corner, with as many as 75 per cent of middle schools possessing vending machines which sell sugary drinks and fatty snacks. With all the emotion going on in their lives, it is not surprising that children going through puberty might reach out to enjoy some "comfort
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food.”

Although some might call them “comfort foods,” but others might call them “competitive foods,” as the U. S. Department of Agriculture does. These are “foods offered at school other than meals served through USDA school meal programs—school breakfast, school lunch, and after-school snack programs” (Kaufman). Because the USDA is responsible to parents and taxpayers, it is careful to provide healthy options for school meals. Plus, this food is being given out by employees and teachers. If a student comes back to the cafeteria for a fourth helping of food, the staff can easily say, “You’ve had enough to eat.” But those who stock vending machines aren’t responsible to anyone: they just want to make a lot of money.

Although there are still thousand of vending machines across the country selling sugary drinks and food with little or no nutritional value, it appears that things are changing slowly. A solution appears to be right around the corner to this unfortunate problem. Obesity is more and more of a concern, and many scientists and doctors strongly urge that all of these drinks be removed from schools (Squires). Now that politicians and parents have recognized the problem, schools are starting to sell more nutritious foods, and soft drink companies, for example, are on the defensive. Although schools may make money from these companies, it is increasingly being proven that it is possible to make money by selling healthy foods and drinks too. As long as this continues in this way, American’s children will hopefully get healthier.

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