

Should States Ban Junk Food in Schools?

In response to rising obesity rates nationally, 16 states have recently adopted school nutrition policies. Such policies ban all junk food sales in schools. Proponents of the ban believe that school is where children spend most of their time, and it is where we lay the foundation for healthy habits. Opponents of the junk food ban believe that improving what we teach about nutrition and requiring more physical activity are better ways to approach obesity than imposing statewide junk-food bans.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not there should be a ban on junk food in schools. Use information from both texts in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. Should states ban junk food in schools?

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Should states ban junk food in schools?

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2006

Source: The New York Times Upfront

YES

America is facing a crisis because of our eating habits. Sixty million adults (20 percent of the population) are obese. Nearly 300,000 people die each year from complications associated with being obese or overweight.

Poor eating habits developed at an early age lead to a lifetime of real health consequences. School is where children spend most of their time, and it is where we lay the foundation for healthy habits. That's why New Jersey is the first state to adopt a comprehensive school nutrition policy that bans candy, soda, and other junk food.

If you go to school in New Jersey, your vending machines and school stores, along with the a la carte lines in your cafeterias, will no longer be able to sell snacks that are high in fat and loaded with sugar. Items that list sugar as the first ingredient will be eliminated and snacks will contain no more than eight grams of total fat and not more than two grams of saturated fat.

Soda and junk food will be replaced with more-nutritious alternatives. You will still have choices, but instead of candy or chips, you may have to decide between an apple or carrot sticks.

It has always been the role of government to help solve problems, including and especially health crises. Obesity is a health epidemic across our country, and we have a responsibility as a government and a society to do all we can to promote good nutrition and healthy eating so we can reverse this alarming trend.

New Jersey is proud to be the first in the nation to adopt a statewide school junk-food ban, and we hope other states follow our lead.

—**Richard J. Codey**
Acting Governor of New Jersey

NO

It may make sense for a school board to ban junk foods in some cases, but there are several issues that should be considered.

To begin with, there is the problem of defining junk food. Are we talking about potato chips, soda, and pastries? What about fried chicken fingers, cheeseburgers, and pizza— foods many school cafeterias serve?

Second, the American education system is designed to give communities control over their schools through local school boards. This principle of local control lies at the root of our democracy. We believe that locally elected school board members are in the best position to make policy decisions that reflect the opinions and needs of their individual communities. Any decisions about what is sold in school vending machines should be determined at this level.

Third, an important part of education is learning to make good choices. An across-the-board junk-food ban does not teach young people how to make healthy choices; it simply removes some of their options.

Fourth, improving what we teach about nutrition and requiring more physical activity are better ways to approach obesity than imposing statewide junk-food bans.

Let me be clear: We believe that childhood obesity is a very serious issue, and principals, teachers, parents, students, and school boards should be doing their part to address this situation. But banning junk food without other strategies and local decision-making is a superficial remedy that dilutes personal and local responsibilities.

— **John Dively, Executive Director,**
Illinois Principals Association

Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=10853>