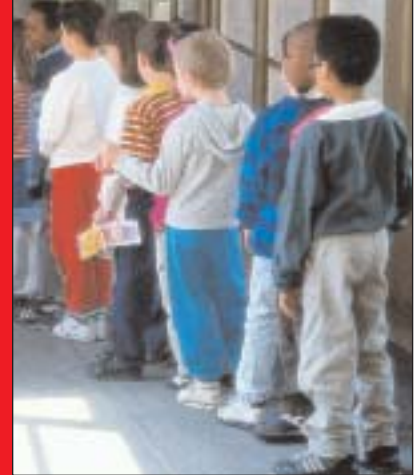


Summary of Findings

- Thirty-four percent of schools included in this study provided the last student in the lunch line with only 10 minutes or less to eat his or her lunch.
- The average time between the last student in line receiving his or her lunch and the end of the lunch period was 13 minutes. This did not vary significantly by level of school.
- As opportunity time to eat decreased, students, cafeteria staff, and lunch monitors were significantly more likely to report that students had insufficient time to buy and eat their lunches.
- When asked what they did when they did not have enough time to buy and eat lunch, students reported buying à la carte snacks, eating from vending machines, bringing lunch from home, skipping lunch entirely, or buying lunch and throwing away a large portion.
- In order to accommodate the entire student body, some large schools scheduled as many as seven lunch periods, and these lunches started as early as 9:25 a.m. Fifty percent of the middle and high schools included in this study scheduled the first lunch period before 11:00 a.m., despite national recommendations that school lunches not begin before this hour.¹
- Providing students with constructive activities at the end of lunch can allow for longer lunch periods without increasing behavioral problems.
- Decreasing wait in line by adding extra serving lines or overlapping lunch waves can allow more students to be served more quickly and can reduce the discrepancy in opportunity time to eat between the first student in line and the last.

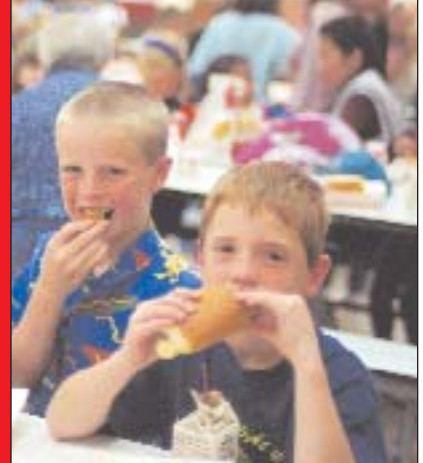


When they did not have enough time to buy and eat lunch, students reported buying à la carte snacks, eating from vending machines, bringing lunch from home, skipping lunch entirely, or buying lunch and throwing away a large portion.

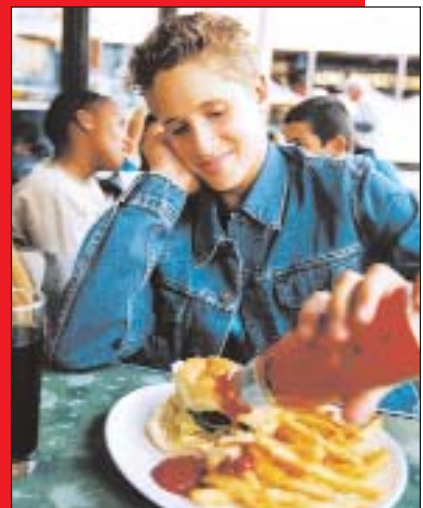


Summary of Findings

- Ninety-five percent of the schools in this study participated in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- At the schools in this study that participated in the NSLP, an average of 53 percent of students bought a lunch on a typical day.
- Student participation in the NSLP was found to decrease with increasing school level. In elementary schools, an average of 59 percent of students bought a qualifying lunch on a typical day. This value dropped to 54 percent in middle schools, and 44 percent in high schools.
- Most school districts in this study provided little or no financial support to the food service program. The majority of food service programs were nearly one hundred percent financially self-supporting, aside from the subsidies and commodities provided by the NSLP. This means that the money made from selling school lunches and other foods must pay not only for the food itself, but also for staff salaries, benefits, staff training, and kitchen equipment.
- Some school districts concentrated more than others on encouraging students to eat lunches containing all of the required components. This is important, as fruit and vegetable components are those most commonly ignored. Focus on fruit and vegetable consumption did not appear to be related to either school level or Economic Reference Group (ERG). In fact, one of the districts that appeared to be most focused on



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THE STATE OF NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN OUR SCHOOLS



Oil-fried French fries were so popular at many schools that some lunch monitors reported students buying lunches for the fries only, and throwing everything else away.



encouraging students to eat the fruit and vegetable lunch components was in the lowest ERG. This suggests that with a commitment from the food service staff and administration, all schools can provide students with nutritious lunches, including appealing fruits and vegetables.

- Food service directors and cafeteria managers reported that, on average, 32 percent of their food came from the federal government commodities program.
- At 63 percent of the schools visited, food service directors or cafeteria managers reported that the commodities they received helped them to provide healthy lunches.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are currently not available to school food service programs through the federal commodities program. A majority of food service directors and cafeteria managers, including those who felt strongly that the commodities helped them provide healthy lunches, reported this to be a significant gap in the federal commodities program.
- Oil-fried French fries were so popular at many schools that some lunch monitors reported students buying lunches for the fries only, and throwing everything else away.
- Food service directors and cafeteria managers who participated in “Farm-to-School” programs reported that these programs were very successful. The most commonly mentioned programs were those featuring fresh Connecticut apples.



None of the schools included in this study met the physical activity recommendations put forth by *Healthy People 2010*....



Summary of Findings

- In elementary schools included in this study, students received an average of 59 minutes of physical education per week or less than one-half the nationally recommended time. Middle school students received an average of 92 minutes per week, which is also less than one-half the recommended time, and high school students averaged 65 minutes per week, which is less than one-third of the physical education time recommended.
- None of the schools included in this study met the physical activity recommendations put forth by *Healthy People 2010*, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Association of Sports and Physical Education, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Connecticut requires some physical education in schools, but neither the amount nor the consistency of the scheduling is prescribed. Even during years when physical education is included in the curriculum, students in 23 percent of the middle schools and 69 percent of the high schools included in this study can go for weeks or even months with no physical education whatsoever.
- The majority of physical education teachers interviewed did not feel that the physical education requirements at their schools were adequate. However, they did feel that when physical education classes were held, they were usually successful in getting students to engage in at least 20 minutes of aerobic activity.
- Providing recess, as well as intramural and interscholastic sports, can create opportunities for daily physical activity.
- Creating after-school programs through partnerships with local groups, such as the town parks and recreation department or the YMCA, can be an effective strategy in helping students become more physically active.