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Composition II

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School Lunches

Proper nutrition in schools is important to the kids and adults of America. In a film called, "Where to Invade Next" Michael Moore travels to France to examine what school lunches are like there. Compared to America, France school lunches are far from similar. Obesity is our fastest growing health issue in America. Schools in America should follow the model of school lunches in France to teach kids what lengthening lunch time can do, how their learning abilities are impacted, and how severe obesity is.

France not only focuses on what the kids eat, but how the kids eat. They properly give them a well balanced meal and enough time to digest it to avoid stomach aches and low energy. They also provide three set recess periods during the day in elementary schools, a 15 minutes run around in the morning, an hour long recess after lunch, then a 15 minute break in the afternoon. Many students bike to school and are encouraged to. They have two hourlong gym periods and field trips and walks to the library or local retirement homes. At home not everyone can provide for their children, but home cook meals, family walks, hikes, games are just little things that can impact a healthy life style and can change a child's life. In an article by Karen Feldscher she talks about the affects of students with short lunch periods. 20 minutes to eat is not enough time to get the proper nutrients kids need to eat a healthy lunch. "Many children, especially those from low-income families, rely on school meals for up to half their daily energy intake, so it is essential that we give students a sufficient amount of time to eat their lunches," said Juliana Cohen, adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition at Harvard Chan

School, assistant professor in the Department of Health Sciences at Merrimack College, and lead author of the study.” (Feldscher). If some lunches are as short as 15 minutes, how are you expected to eat their fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and more of the proper nutrients? If that is even being served? In the U.S. it isn't. In the film, you see how French kids receive hour lunches, four-course meals with the right nutrients, and time to digest. Lengthening lunchtime can provide a better form of digestion and a higher level of energy to help learn in school. France has conquered this idea of enough time to consume food and shows magnificent outputs of this method. Schools in America need to focus on lengthening lunchtimes to show change in the students energy levels that teachers expect them to have, and to help with kids getting enough time to eat a healthy meal, not scarfing down a tasty cake for lunch.

Having a healthy body plays a major key role in being successful in school. Healthy school lunches can create a future for your child to live longer. It provides key nutrients and a steady daily calorie count. School lunches provides one-third of their daily need for protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium, and nutrients that children lack. Children need to limit their fat intake that comes mostly from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. An article states, “A healthy school lunch limits fat to less than 30 percent and saturated fat to less than 10 percent of overall calories over the course of a week” (Fisk). A healthy school lunch will be an essential part to limit obesity rates and other health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. These are vital health conditions that can be preventable if we teach our children to eat the right way. If schools provide unhealthy lunch options that appeal to kids because it “taste better”, the kids will likely choose the unhealthier option, giving them a lower energy level. A study called “Journal of School Health” showed that children who ate more fruits, vegetables and profiter and less calories from fat, scored higher on literacy tests compared to kids with an unhealthy diet. It's comical, teachers expect students to have energy and participate when it comes time for class, meanwhile the lunch being served in the cafeteria does not fulfill those

requirements for the full energized self. Another study was called the “Detroit Healthy Youth Initiative” funded by a Carol M. White Physical Education Program grant that determined the impact of the Michigan Model Nutrition Curriculum of nutrition knowledge, efficacy expectations and eating behaviors in students who are in middle school. It resulted in significant positive changes in the knowledge and behavior of the children when they ate healthy. “Students in the intervention group also felt more confident that they could eat healthy” (Fahlman, Dake, McCaughy, Martin). Confidence is being lacked due to the children's own eating experience. School lunches is a social and economic issue. Our taxes need to go to benefit our children and the future of America. Families cant always provide healthy home cooked meals for kids to bring to school, so they give kids money to buy lunch at school resulting in purchasing chicken fingers and french fries and a lemonade. Schools food protects children against hunger. Low-income children rely on their daily nutrients from lunches so if they're getting the wrong nutrients, the outcome will be poor. School meals are a huge gate to teach kids lifelong healthy eating habits. They need to be provided with how many sugars, calories, carbs, vitamins to expand their life expectancy. The children need to know the benefits of eating healthy and the downfall to eating unhealthy. They need to see what their life would be like when they're old and obese and not live as long. School should be teaching that. In France there is classes on food and nutrition and why they are served the food they are. If you go to a school that doesn't have a health class that stresses about nutrients, and your cafeterias are serving food that is not the proper meals, what are you to expect from your student or child? It isn't there fault. It's the schools. In a research study with Harvard School of Public Health in 2009 showed that children will eat healthy school lunches and more vegetables if they are prepared in a visually appealing way. 13 years of school kids are fed from school lunches, those 13 years could impact the rest of your life. Health issues come into play day to day. Sickness can come from being hungry and could lead to hospitalization. Low-come children with unhealthy nutrient eating habits will have negative

health impacts. Schools and families need to enlighten the kids on what the effects of their food habits will be if they continue to eat what they eat. Having a health breakfast is key to improving learning skills and to grow.

One and every three kids in the United states is obese or overweight, statistics show. Child Obesity is a condition when the weight for the kids height and age is overweight. America is ranked 1st on the obesity list while France is 23rd. That is three times more than France. Statistically equivalent to 30.6% for America and 9.4% for France. A recent USDA report from 2008 showed that 16.7 million children lived in households that hunger multiples throughout the year. School-age children are not eating the correct levels of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products due to an Institute of Medicine report. For some students, the school breakfast and lunch thats provided is the only meal they eat a day. If they are being fed food that will only kill them in the end, what are we to do about that? Receiving the right nutrients can determine children's futures and how they live the rest of their lives. France's quality of health care system is 88% more than United states. Its ranked 2nd in the world compared to Americas ranking of 41st. The french have an 11.4% percent of the probability of not reaching 60 years old, while Americans have a 12.8% chance of not making it to 60. Obesity is very serious, it can be accompanied with depression, loss of self-esteem and anxiety. It also is a main target of bullying in schools. It can be preventable.

The statistics show it, America needs to look to France for school lunches. What America needs for their school lunches it to strive for a salad bar to get the fruits and vegetables in. In the vending machines provide healthier snacks as well as the snacks in the cafeteria line. The school needs to focus on the plate and where the food is coming from, specifically strive for only locally produced food. A plate full of all the nutrients the kids needs and a variety of different meals, not repeating itself where kids will get tired of the same lunch options. If we are paying tax money to go to schools to provide for our children, why aren't we paying for something that

is beneficial to them and can keep them living longer? This needs to change. Although in 2012, the US government attempted to approve school menus by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids act which required meals to be lower in fat, calories and sodium, hasn't had the best outcome.

Some studies say more kids bring their own lunches and end up throwing away more food that they buy from school. It did show some change with kids eating 16% more vegetables and 25% more fruits at lunch. Not comparable to results and low obesity rates of France.

America can learn a lot from France. It is possible to show kids what a balanced diet is and the factors that come along with it. For a Nation who has one of the highest obesity rates, it should be a priority. We have the power to make these changes. Schools in America needs to follow France's model to support the children of America and help them in the long run.

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