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**The San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco, CA**

## **One School's Victory**

**June 29, 2003**

**Editorial Page**

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STUDENTS at Aptos Middle School in San Francisco are not exactly celebrating that their school has been purged of unhealthy foods. "Students eat junk food because that's what they like," says 13-year-old Cristy Cobb, an eighth-grader. "I kind of want chips sometimes for lunch." Christine Revelo, a sixth-grader, says she used to buy a soda every other day at school. But those halcyon days are over. In February the school underwent a food revolution.

The main target: The school's snack bar, known in San Francisco as "beaneries." Aptos' beanery traditionally sold items like mega-cheeseburgers, oversized pizzas, Slim Jims and Hostess cupcakes. "I'd see kids coming in with \$2 and buying a 20-ounce caffeinated soda and a giant bag of chips every day," said Aptos Principal Linal Ishibashi. "I almost felt like a criminal selling this stuff to them."

Now students can select from a menu with items like Rosie's steaming chicken vegetable soup (made by Rose Ghiotto, the veteran cook-manager of the cafeteria), fresh pasta and sushi. The school's two vending machines have been emptied of sodas, and filled with bottled water. Instead of whole pizzas, pizza is sold by the slice, along with a salad.

But gradually, students are accepting the regime change. "Kids complained at first, but then we polled them about what they'd like to see as healthy options," said Dr. Mel Heymann, an Aptos parent. He's also a professor of pediatrics and chief of gastroenterology and nutrition at UCSF. "We have not seen kids bringing in their own junk food or quarts of soda. It has worked out really well."

And Ishibashi says there have been other unexpected benefits. Teachers say they've noticed fewer discipline problems after the lunch period, less littering. Sales of

bottled water from vending machines now exceed previous sales of soda. And profits at the beanery have also increased since the sale of healthier foods began.

Except for handful of sites, all other schools in San Francisco have "beaneries" that still sell foods high in fat and sugar. But the changes at Aptos are expected to be the first stage in a proposed transformation of what kids can eat at schools throughout San Francisco.

In January, the school board passed a resolution calling for a phasing out of sales of unhealthy food items, beginning this fall. If San Francisco implements the recommendations of an advisory committee established by the district this spring - in part based on Aptos' experience - it would arguably offer the most nutritious food of any school district nationwide.

The committee, made up of parents and health professionals, is recommending that no candy or soda be sold on any campus, even to raise funds for school clubs and activities. Its most radical proposal is that any packaged snack food sold at a school will have to contain a minimum of 5 percent of eight essential nutrients, including protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and B, niacin and thiamin. In addition, the committee is urging the district to find ways to provide more nutrition education to students and to beef up PE classes.

At the urging of school officials, the group finished its proposals weeks ago, but the district has yet to take any action. Now that schools have closed for the summer, with each passing day the challenge of transforming the district's food programs this fall - as called for in the board resolution - becomes more difficult. We urge Superintendent Arlene Ackerman and the school board to quickly approve and then implement the committee's well-considered proposals.

It makes sense for San Francisco to take the lead in promoting healthier eating habits in our schools. Children also have a right to benefit from a new "California cuisine" based in the schools. Schools alone won't solve the problem of childhood obesity. But the least they can do is teach children, and by extension their parents, about healthier alternatives.

What you can do

-- Urge San Francisco Schools Superintendent Arlene Ackerman to recommend to the school board that it adopt the reforms recommended by the district's nutrition advisory committee, if you live in San Francisco. Ackerman's e-mail is [aackerm@muse.sfusd.edu](mailto:aackerm@muse.sfusd.edu).

-- Obtain copies of resolutions passed by school boards in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Oakland, if you live outside of San Francisco.

Encourage your school board to enact similar resolutions.