



# The GrEAT DebATE

Should the government have a rule that school lunches be healthy?

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFK). The main goal of the law was to raise the minimum nutritional standards for public school lunches served in schools as part of the National School Lunch Program. The underlying health reasons for offering more nutritious school lunches, and in particular, concern over the number of children who are overweight, led to this initiative.

Have students form a class graph based on whether they agree or disagree with the question, “Should the government have a rule that school lunches be healthy?” Allow them to be on one side or the other, or anywhere in between. Then, read the boxes one at a time in a random order, or cut them up and have students take turns reading them. After each box, have students move if the information causes them to change their minds; remind them that strong minds change if they get a good reason!

For an added wrinkle, take a picture of the initial class graph and compare it to the final class graph, after all boxes have been read. Which set of arguments did the students find more persuasive?

## PROs of Creating Healthier School Lunches

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that one in five children in the United States is obese. Many people believe that high levels of fat in school foods is one of the leading contributors to this problem in our country.  
(source: [CDC](#))

A Harvard study found that this healthy food initiative has NOT increased food waste.  
(source: [Harvard School of Public Health](#))

A study from the United States Department of Agriculture found that kids are eating more fruits and vegetables (16% more vegetables and 23% more fruit) as a result of the HHFKA.  
(source: [USDA](#))

A 2009 investigation by *USA Today* found that meat served in U.S. schools wouldn't meet the quality or safety standards of fast-food restaurants.  
(source: [USA Today](#))

A 2011 study from the Journal of Health Economics showed that feeding kids healthy well-balanced meals leads to better learning and memory.  
(source: [Food Revolution Network](#))

## CONs of Creating Healthier School Lunches

Many people argue that it's not the school lunch foods they are eating that are unhealthy, but the lack of time to eat it, which then leads to kids not finishing at lunch and overeating on quick and easy foods after school. They argue instead of focusing on changing up the menu, focus on giving students more time to eat it in order to prevent overeating at home.  
(source: [Live Science](#))

The School Nutrition Association claims that more food is being wasted because kids are throwing it away instead of giving it a try.  
(source: [NPR](#))

Healthy food is not cheap. Many school districts cannot afford to provide fresh fruit and vegetables over less expensive canned or processed foods.  
(source: [The Washington Times](#))

Efforts to improve school lunch nutrition have not had much success in reducing childhood obesity rates.  
(source: [TIME.com](#))

People have different nutritional needs, and what's healthy for one person may not be healthy for another.  
(source: [CBS News](#))

