Select Committee on Children and Youth
Tennessee General Assembly

School Nutrition Survey Results
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School Nutrition Survey Results

Total Number of School Nutrition Surveys Distributed to School Systems/LEAs: 143
60 of 143 Surveys Returned or 42%

Survey completed by:

Food Service Program Supervisor/Nutrition Director: 50 responses or 83%
Principal: 5 responses or 8%
School/LEA Business Manager: 3 responses or 5%
Coordinated School Health Personnel: 2 responses or 3%

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

☐ Are Vending Machines Located On Site In The......

**Elementary Schools:**
Yes: 45 responses or 75%
No: 14 responses or 23%
Not Applicable: 0
No Answer: 1 response or 2%

**Middle Schools:**
Yes: 47 responses or 78%
No: 5 responses or 8%
Not Applicable: 7 responses or 12%
No Answer: 1 response or 2%

**High Schools:**
Yes: 51 responses or 85%
No: 2 responses or 3%
Not Applicable: 7 responses or 12%
No Answer: 0
At What Times Are Vending Machine Items Sold At Schools (may be more than one response):

- All Day: 26 responses or 43%
- After Lunch Only: 21 responses or 35%
- After School Only: 8 responses or 13%
- Anytime Except Breakfast or Lunch Times: 16 responses or 27%
- Lunch Only: 5 responses or 8%
- Before School: 2 responses or 3%
- Breaks: 4 responses or 7%
- No Answer: 1 response or 2%
- No Machines Located in Schools: 3 responses or 5%

Noted Responses To Kinds/Types Of Foods Sold In School Vending Machines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soda/Cola</th>
<th>Candy</th>
<th>Honey Buns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Gum</td>
<td>Sport Drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Crackers</td>
<td>Cookies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupcakes</td>
<td>Granola Bars</td>
<td>Popcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy Bars</td>
<td>Trail Mix</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastries</td>
<td>Pretzels</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nutritional Items Noted With Number Of Responses:

- Water: 32 responses or 53%
- Fruit: 1 response or 2%
- Trail Mix: 1 response or 2%
- Granola: 1 response or 2%
- Milk: 2 responses or 3%

Earnings From Vending Machines Are Used For: (may be more than one response):

- Supplies for School/Students: 11 responses or 18%
- Sports: 9 responses or 15%
- Student Incentives: 6 responses or 10%
- Teacher/Staff Incentives: 3 responses or 5%
- Facility Improvements: 2 responses or 3%
- School Operational Expenses: 7 responses or 12%
- Supplement Budget/General Fund: 15 responses or 25%
- No Direct Response: 12 responses or 20%

Noted Responses on Use of Monies:

*Supplies—copy paper, equipment, ribbons, Xerox, computers, ACT forms, magazine subscriptions, posters
*Sports—building of weight room, fund athletic programs
*Student Incentives—assembly programs, student activities, trophies, reward programs
*Teacher/Staff Incentives—Teacher Christmas presents, office parties, T-Shirts
*Facility Improvements—PA System, carpet, flowers, vans
*School Operational Expenses—unpaid lunch charges, phone bills, batteries, keys, oil filters
Who Is In Charge Of The Monies Earned Through Vending Machine Sales?

- Principals: 38 responses or 63%
- Principals/School Board: 1 response or 2%
- Committee: 2 responses or 3%
- Food Service Program: 2 responses or 3%
- Combination of Principal/Food Service Program: 6 responses or 10%
- No Answer: 8 responses or 13%
- Not applicable (no machines in schools): 3 responses or 5%

How Much Money Is Earned Per Year From Vending Machine Sales In Each School System?

- $0-500: 2 responses or 3%
- $501-$1,000: 3 responses or 5%
- $1,001-2,500: 2 responses or 3%
- $2,501-$5,000: 2 responses or 3%
- $5,001-$7,500: 3 responses or 5%
- $7,501-$10,000: 0
- $10,001-$15,000: 0
- $15,001-$20,000: 4 responses or 7%
- $20,001-$25,000: 1 response or 2%
- Over $25,000: 27 responses or 45%
- School receives NO money from vending machine sales. 3 responses or 5%
- Don’t know: 9 responses or 15%
- No answer: 4 responses or 7%

Do Vending Machine Sales Impact the USDA School Lunch Program?

- Yes: 28 responses or 47%
- No: 17 responses or 28%
- Not Applicable: 4 responses or 7%
- Varies: 6 responses or 10%
- No Answer: 5 responses or 8%

Noted Responses on Impact of Sales

- At two of our 3 high schools the impact is significant. At the middle and elementary schools the impact is slight to not at all.
- Our policy states that vending/other sales will not compete with NSLP. However, some principals choose to ignore that policy and openly allow access to vending or other sales during breakfast/lunch.
- No affect. The students are not allowed to use them during meals.
- Students who have access to the machines any time before lunch may be impacted by not being hungry or as hungry by lunch as they might have been otherwise.
- Participation in the school lunch program was lower when machines were operating during meal periods last year (2001-2002). The interim director mandated that all machines be turned off during the lunch period the current school year. There was a significant loss in revenue for the school lunch program last year.
- In the high schools some students strictly eat from the machines. In Jr. High the students usually drink sodas instead of milk and buy snacks.
- Vending machine sales are not a positive impact for USDA Program. I feel that many students eat from them and never get a good nutritious meal from the cafeteria.
- No impact.
• Being that only drink machines are used by students and they are only available after lunch it has (not) hurt the program very much.
• No appreciable affect.
• Sometimes takes monies that would be spent in food service.
• Does not impact Elementary Lunch Program. Impacts the 7-12 lunch program very little. Very few students fail to eat lunch because of the morning snack break—our first lunch starts at 11:40 and the last shift starts at 12:40.
• They are turned off at lunch.
• Vending machines sales cut down on the number of reimbursable meals sold at high schools and 9th grade level primarily, but has some impact on the 5-8th grade students at elementary schools.
• Definite negative impact. Loss of revenue in a la carte and reimbursable meals. Loss of potential income. Loss of student participation. Increase in number of students charging meals.
• The sale does not impact the School Lunch Program as long as they are turned off until the end of the last lunch period. At that time the students have eaten in the cafeteria and are not hungry and they have already spent their money in the cafeteria.
• Elementary—no effect. Middle—no effect. High School—minimum. Purchases are not available to students 2 hours prior to lunch and 2 hours after lunch.
• Participation in lunch decreases because it is faster to use machines rather than to stand in a lunch line.
• Very little—if children didn’t eat out of vending machines is no proof they would all eat in cafeteria.
• Elementary and middle school children who know they will have a morning snack are not as likely to eat breakfast at school and they will also not eat lunch if they have had a morning snack. I wish break/snack time was always in the afternoon (after lunch). At the high school the vending machines are not in or near the cafeteria so they do not have a tremendous impact on our program.
• Participation drops 5-10% at the middle school because students have access to vending machines. Participation in high school drops another 10-15% because students buy a drink and snack instead of getting a meal.
• The student meal participation is lower in the middle schools and high schools due to the competitive food sales. Competitive foods have a very negative impact on the school nutrition program. It creates a difficult situation—competing with your principals when we should all be on the same team. This should be a students health and well-being team first and foremost. It is also very hard to compete with junk food that is marketed by media and manufacturers that care nothing about a young person’s well being. Companies that care only about profits—at any cost to a student’s health.
• In our system, vending sales do not impact the School Breakfast or School Lunch Program. Vending machine use is restricted/prohibited during and prior to serving times of meals. Cafeteria monitors do not allow sodas to be brought into the cafeteria.
• Supplement to school lunch sales.
• Juices sold in the vending machines compliments the USDA Lunch Program. In high school, lunch sales are somewhat less. At one time we did not sell during lunch and students brought snacks from home.
• Not at all.
• Very little.
• In high school it is possible that students may purchase vending machine and food/drink and therefore, may not participate in the school breakfast and/or lunch.
• I don’t believe it has an impact on our program.
• No.
• The largest impact is at the high school level. Students purchase vending machine items rather that school meals. It also forces the school lunch program to offer a a la carte items to compete for the business.
• With all things considered, it would NOT be a positive impact.
• No competition. I have the full support of my superintendent and school board on not selling anything that does not comply with the nutritional standards of our daily meals and we have not gone without and have made ends meet.
• I don’t think it makes much difference if our competitive food policy is enforced. In one school it has hurt the program.
• Thankfully, not at all.
• Some students eat from vending machines rather than lunch and breakfast programs.
• Middle schools-no impact. High school-since it is a long standing practice to have vending sales throughout the day, there is no data which indicates impact.
• In schools where the machines are open during breakfast and lunch, it reduces our total revenue.
• Children often “save” their money for snacks later in the day and either charge their meals or don’t eat. Although they aren’t supposed to have access to sodas at lunch, many children come in the cafeteria with cold sodas.
• In our county, 75% of students are participating in our school lunch program and 31% are eating breakfast. With a target population of 24% not eating lunch, we need to provide better choices in and out of the cafeteria.
• The biggest problem we have is because the vending machines are not controlled during the serving time, we have those items going through the serving line which is in direct conflict with our competitive food policy and are having to address this problem often.
• Some children use their lunch money at the vending machine.
The main problem is that it causes children to charge their meals because they use/save their cash for the machines. Most parents do not know this and accuse me when I send home charge slips.

Lower grades not noticeable. Upper grades, yes, because they will wait and not eat a full meal to purchase a carbonated drink, etc.

Students are buying from vending machines instead of eating in the cafeteria.

I think concessions impact us more—on concession days (Fridays) we sell less and the kids eat less.

None.

Doesn’t. The machines are not on during vending times.

Very small impact in elementary schools.

It is difficult to convince students to purchase nutritious, low fat meals when those other types of food are readily available. Machines are quicker with no waiting time and they are free to take their food anywhere. Naturally, vending sales take dollars that would go to the school nutrition department.

Not a problem since items are not sold during school hours.

We compete for sales.

Causes participation to drop at times.

Definitely impacts because they are available at meal time with no waiting lines. Middle/high schools have lower participation due to machines.

Less students eat; our profits are less; and we have to provide similar sales to attract new customers. They have no consideration for the health of the student. Our losses are getting greater every year.

Because students start getting snack beginning at 8:15 a.m. at the middle school, breakfast sales are hurt. At the elementary schools students get a snack as close as one hour before lunch. They don’t choose as many items for lunch; at high school, they try to plug in vending machines during lunch.

They do not impact our lunch program.

Are Foods Being Routinely Sold In Schools Other Than Through The Cafeteria/USDA Program and/or Vending Machines?

Yes: 30 responses or 50%

No: 30 responses or 50%

Circumstances by which this occurs. Sampling of answers…

Fundraisers
Pizza parties for classrooms
Candy sales for ball teams/clubs
Sold in school offices/snack stores
Coaches sell candy
Candy bars sold in between classes
Special Education Department bakes and sells to learn cooking skills
Teachers sell for supplies
Cafeteria sells drinks to supplement Food Service Program
Bake sales
Ice cream in cafeteria
Cookies/breakfast sandwiches sold during morning hours ($29,000 net reported in one school)

Are Vending Machines Sales of Food and Drinks In Schools Considered To Be Beneficial or Detrimental To The Daily Health and Well-being Of Students?

Detrimental: 40 responses or 67%
Beneficial: 11 responses or 18%
Non-Specific/No Answer: 9 responses or 15%
Detrimental Comments:

- Teaches poor alternative to healthy eating food choices. Teaches that money is more important than good nutrition.
- Students will not make good choices when bombarded with poor choices.
- Could only be beneficial if milk or juices were sold.
- Students who daily vend food and drink cannot be hungry enough to eat the nutritious meal provided.
- Students consuming foods of minimal nutritional value have a greater incidence of obesity, learning problems, dental caries, and long term related illness. Diabetes has increased at a alarming rate.
- The food and drinks in vending machine are higher in fat and often offer little or no nutritional value.
- Our USDA approved menus are nutritious and healthy for students. The food in our vending machine are mostly what I would call “junk food”.
- Caffeine is a drug and sugar decays teeth. Caffeine curves appetite and prevents students from eating.
- Detrimental if it is used in place of eating in the cafeteria.
- Children with limited allowance may buy junk and have no money for a nutritious lunch.
- Detrimental if they snack only and don’t eat a real lunch or breakfast meal.
- Detrimental—affects concentration, mental alertness, nutritional food intake choices.
- Most items sold are high in fat and sugar content with a minimum nutritional value. Students would buy these foods rather than eating a nutritional meal in the cafeteria.
- Detrimental because energy levels and ability to concentrate decrease when students eat sugary meals. This results in lower academic performance.
- Obviously a detriment because I would hope that they would eat a balanced meal or something besides just a snack.
- Vending machines are detrimental to students’ health. Jr. high and high school students need extra calories but machines have no healthy choices other than water in the drink machines.
- Only eating sugary vending machine food and drink items cause blood sugar levels to shoot way up……this not only affects a person’s mood and alertness but also cognitive skills, memory, arithmetic skills, reading speed, and attention span. High caloric sugary foods also lead to less exercise and childhood obesity.
- Not beneficial except for students who do not buy lunch.
- Provides an eating alternative that is not the variety and nutritional content of the foods provided in the cafeteria.
- Detrimental in that food high in sugar and fat are sold.
- Vending machines are detrimental to the daily health of our students. Each day that a student participated in the sales or just observes the sales, we have encouraged unhealthy behaviors. A student needs good nutrition to learn.
- In emergency situations or to shorten serving lines it could be beneficial, beyond those two exceptions, it is detrimental.
- I believe vending machine sales would be detrimental to the daily health of our students. The snacks sold in the cafeteria meet the guidelines outlined by the state for food for nutritional value.
- Students are choosing foods of minimal nutritional value rather than foods that are nutritionally sound.
- Snack foods/drinks don’t fill up hungry students and high sugar/fat items are not good for maintaining alertness.
- It contributes to the problem in America’s youth of obesity.
- If the upper grades are not schedule to eat (until) late then they will slip into the cafeteria and get something from the machines (Coke is usually preferred) so therefore they do not get anything nutritious.
- It is not beneficial to health/well-being but it makes needed money for the schools.
- Children spent their pocket money on high-fat/high sugar products.
- Students are consuming more empty calories. Obesity is definitely a problem for a great percentage of children.
- Fosters poor nutrition habits. Between “take out” and vending machines, we wonder why we are becoming an obese society?
- The effects are evident in health problems, obesity, etc. When students only had cafeteria items available they were limited, but too have much healthier choices.
- Bottom line—it’s all about profit. A new middle school has just opened and only have to order milk one time per week—everyone goes to the vending machines. They need their calcium during this growth stage.
- Students are getting full on snacks between breakfast and lunch and don’t want healthier lunch choices.
- The foods in the machines are of minimal nutritional value—high in sugar and fat. Students consume them rather than a variety of foods with high nutritional value.
- Absolutely detrimental. They promote poor eating habits. Yes, but they contribute to the extremely high ADD/ADHD children we have.

Beneficial Comments:

- It helps us to implement a behavior program. They are rewarded for positive behavior for having chances to purchase snacks.
- Beneficial. We have one machine and it contains juice drinks.
- Actually, I believe having the water available throughout the day has a positive impact in that it encourages water consumption.
- Many of the vending machine choices are considered healthy snacks—peanut butter, peanuts, juice drinks, etc.
Vending machine sales are beneficial to students, especially those who stay after school for school events such as band practice, football, etc. if the students have good choices in the machines. Many students need an afternoon supplement for energy. They also provide additional funding for the school.

Many of these foods do have nutritional value and students benefit from supplementing their meals.

Vending machines in moderation should be allowed. The sale of the items benefit students in the school after normal school hours, after-school activities and summer school activities.

Juices sold are of great nutritional value.

The cafeteria begins serving at 10:45 and the children are hungry by snack time (2:00) and some of the children go to day care and sitters after school.

The vending machine items are considered to be supplemental to our breakfast and lunch program, not a replacement for them. Used on this basis, they should not be detrimental to student’s health and well-being.

Parents request that snacks be made available to students. Students who will not eat from the lunch room do get some nourishment from the vending machines. This is an option and can only be purchased if parents send the money for them to do so.

Non-specific:

- Children are going to eat what they are going to eat. Meal patterns begin at home.
- Both—they provide a snack but are not healthy foods.
- Machines are detrimental if they only offer poor choices that are available to students prior to mealtime. We recently installed a milk vending machine in one of our high schools. It contains milk products and 100% juice products. Students are making healthy choices now that it is available. The machine stays on at all times. I would rather see a student selecting milk or juice products from a vending machine than going hungry all morning. As funding allows, we will install this machine in all high schools and middle schools in the future. If changes in vending machines sales occur, it should be to promote healthy choices.

Are Vending Machines Sales of Food and Drinks In Schools Considered To Be Beneficial or Detrimental To The Long-Term Health and Well-being Of Students?

Detrimental: 45 responses or 75%
Beneficial: 8 responses or 13%
Non-Specific/No Answer: 7 responses or 12%

Detrimental Comments:

- Establishes a pattern of poor eating that is hard to break.
- Children are being taught good nutrition in school but they are not being encouraged to practice good nutrition with easy access to vending machines on campus.
- Detrimental effects in the long term health of children include increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, bone and joint disorders, gall bladder disease and cancer.
- Again it is the fat issue as students are eating more and moving less.
- It sets in motion a habit of eating from vending machines at school which carries on into adult life. We need a balance for long-term well-being.
- Dental.
- Helps develop poor eating patterns. Detrimental to long term health because in many instances they just snack instead of getting essential vitamins and minerals they need during growing years. Good eating habits need to be formed early so smaller children especially don’t need the influence of vending.
- Detrimental—results in poor eating habits, poor nutritional intake and overweight/obese teens.
- Most items sold are high in fat and sugar content with a minimum nutritional value. Students would buy these foods rather than eating a nutritional meal in the cafeteria. At one time our county health department was conducting a study in our schools and it was alarming the number of overweight children that had high blood pressure by the time they were in the 4th grade. This would definitely contribute to their health as adults. We must realize however that the average student eats a maximum of ten meals at school per week so they must not be having nutritional meals at home for this to be so prevalent.
- Detrimental because it encourages life long poor energy/snacking habits when schools encourage vending machines.
- Vending machine foods that are purchased in any grocery store are very detrimental to health on a continued consumption on a daily basis.
- We are seeing an increase in the number of children with diabetes.
- Habits begin early in life and purchasing snacks from a vending machine is a much more popular choice to a child than selecting meat and veggies when they pass through the lunch line.
Detrimental to long term health because they are developing habits of snacking on junk foods.

Cokes and the other empty calorie vending machine items are taking the place of nutritious foods in many students’ diet. The long term affects include childhood and adult obesity. Obesity and other diet related conditions that are developing rapidly in our state include diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease, many cancers, osteoporosis and dental problems. Students are setting themselves up for these and other diet and lifestyle affected diseases.

Does not help promote learning lifelong healthy eating habits – acts as a “quick fix” and meal replacement.

By allowing vending machines, the school is endorsing the concept of poor nutrition. The availability of such food and drinks demonstrates to students that it is okay to have a “Mountain Dew” for breakfast. Habits that we begin as students follow us throughout our lifetime. We should be teaching students a healthy lifestyle to include healthy regular meals—not vending machine items for meals and vending machine items for snacks whenever the student chooses. We need to emphasize the healthy lifestyle to our students and practice what we teach.

High impact energy boosters that don’t last.

The soft drinks and candy would be detrimental.

Vending machine sales would be detrimental to the long-term health if they were not monitored closely and continuously.

Students get in the habit of making poor nutritional choices which become a part of their lifestyle and rarely change.

High sugar/fat cause long range health problems. We have an obesity problem with our youth already.

A person who has developed good eating habits early in life will take that with them throughout life and have less health problems and obesity.

Good nutrition is necessary for growing children.

Children need calcium and vitamins in the beverages not sugar.

These food habits will go with students their entire lives. The occurrence of diabetes, heart diseases, etc. will only continue to rise.

I feel that a hot well balanced lunch is the most beneficial meal for a child. I’m proud that our school system has not started selling the children items from vending machines.

Dental, diabetes, obesity. Students form habits of drinking sugar-filled soft drinks all day long. Lots of people who just cut out this habit are able to effectively lose weight.

More Type 2 Diabetes emerging in younger students and more obesity, especially in elementary age.

Detrimental—causes sugar problems, abnormal glucose, obesity, ADD/ADHD—those are terrible things!

Beneficial Comments:
- It helps us to implement a behavior program. Students are rewarded for positive behavior and they are able to make long term changes.
- Increase water consumption and forming the habit of drinking water is beneficial.
- Making the correct decisions on healthy snacks contributes to one’s lifetime wellness.
- As long as these foods are not replacing meals. We don’t feel like they are.
- Decision making on appropriate food choices will be a lifelong task. Controlled choices at the middle and high school level are appropriate and should not be detrimental to the student’s well-being.
- Juices sold are nutritional and help to promote good health.
- We believe students should have a wide variety of choices each day. As educators in charge of their well-being, we should strive to seek out ways to help them learn to make good choices. These skills for making healthy choices will be used throughout their lives. We should not shelter them from things they will always find in their surroundings nor should we deprive them of nutritious supplements outside of the traditional mealtimes. The healthy choices they are offered are beneficial to their health. If students only had healthy choices in vending machines at school, the students and the schools would benefit.
- Whether we like it or not, these types of food are all that some students will eat.

Non-specific:
- There should be no detriment to lifelong health if these items are consumed in moderation. As long as the school administration monitors the sale of these items and has the overall interest of the student as a main concern, students should be allowed in moderation to purchase from machines as long as it doesn’t effect the School Nutrition Program.
Within the last 3 years has the school system been penalized for non-compliance with the federal regulations of the USDA School Lunch Program?

Yes: 4 responses or 7%
No: 54 responses or 90%
No Answer: 2 responses or 3%

Survey Conducted and Results Complied by Staff of the Select Committee on Children and Youth
October 10, 2002

Disclaimer: This is not a scientific survey, but merely a collection of submitted data.

For questions regarding this survey, please contact the Office of the Select Committee on Children and Youth at #615-741-6239.