**Should Junk Food Be Banned In Schools?**

**YES**

Americans are increasingly overweight. Eighteen percent of young Americans—nearly one in every five—are obese, according to the **CDC**. Moreover, this rate continues to rise. **Obesity** can lead to a number of health problems, including heart disease and **diabetes**. Obesity is a serious concern that requires immediate action, and local government can help.

More than 32 million students eat lunch at school every day, and 12 million eat breakfast at school too. Two meals, five days a week adds up to an opportunity to make a real impact on students’ daily habits. Taking junk food out of schools and replacing it with **healthful** **alternatives** is a good way for public schools to guide students toward making the right food choices. As every teacher and principal knows, healthy children learn better and have higher achievement and that good health begins with good eating habits.

Across the country, state and city governments have made rules affecting what their residents eat. For example, in 2006, New York City made a law to get rid of all **artificial trans fats** in restaurants. California has regulated the food in their schools since 2007. This is not a new idea. It has already been tested elsewhere.

School is a place for children to learn and grow. It is a public responsibility to make sure that all students learn habits that will keep them healthy throughout their lives. That is why junk food should be banned from schools and replaced with healthful alternatives.

**NO**

Everyone wants students to be healthy and make good choices about what they eat and drink. But it’s not as easy as just passing a law. Individuals need to take personal **responsibility** for themselves and make their own choices. The government can’t do it for them.

First of all, being healthy is not just about avoiding certain foods. Students should learn that the key to good health lies in eating a variety of lean proteins, whole grains, and fresh fruits and vegetables; it is more than simply avoiding soda and chips. Also, students should be encouraged to exercise daily. In other words, having a healthy lifestyle goes well beyond making **nutritious** food choices.

There is also the question of how to define “junk food.” Is it only snacks and fast food? Should there be rules about the amount of **sodium** or fat that food served in schools can contain? What about artificial trans fats and **high-fructose corn syrup**? Who will decide whether or not foods containing these common ingredients are also “junk”?

The goal of any proposal to **ban** junk food in schools is correct, but the method is not. Banning junk food in schools is simply not the answer. Everyone—including parents, students, and government officials—should support good health. But choice belongs to the individual. And choosing to make healthful eating a lifelong habit is no exception.