



## Chocolate Milk on School Menus Under Scrutiny

Does the Nanny State have no bounds? Apparently not, as even beverages are at risk. The newest example of “government knows best” can be found in public schools, where chocolate milk is soon to be banned in an effort to target childhood obesity. MSNBC reports, “With schools under increasing pressure to offer healthier food, the staple on children’s cafeteria trays has come under attack over the very ingredient that made it so popular—sugar.”

Some school districts have already moved towards removing flavored milk from the menu. Others have sought milk products that are flavored with sugar, a healthier alternative to high-fructose corn syrup.



In the state of Florida, the Board of Education is currently considering a statewide ban of chocolate milk in schools. School boards in Washington, D.C., and Berkeley, California, have already done so. Similarly, Los Angeles Unified’s Superintendent John Deasy has announced plans to push for the removal of chocolate and strawberry milk from school menus.

Not everyone is on board with such endeavors, however. MSNBC writes:

But nutritionists — and parents — are split over whether bans make sense, especially when about 70 percent of milk consumed in schools is flavored, mostly chocolate, according to the industry-backed Milk Processors Education Program.

Many, including the School Nutrition Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, American Heart Association, and National Medical Association, argue that the nutritional value of flavored low-fat or skim milk outweighs the harm of added sugar. Milk contains nine essential nutrients including calcium, vitamin D and protein.

A joint statement submitted by the various opposing organizations highlights studies that show that children still derive greater nutritional benefits from drinking fat-free, flavored milk and are not heavier than those that do not drink milk.

Julie Buric, vice president of marketing for the Milk Processors Education Program, says of the school’s efforts, “Chocolate milk has been unfairly pegged as one of the causes of obesity.”

Still, others contend that chocolate milk must go.

“Chocolate milk is soda in drag,” says Ann Cooper, director of nutrition services for the Boulder Valley School District in Louisville, Colorado. “It works as a treat in homes, but it doesn’t belong in schools.”

Unfortunately, as some school districts moved towards removing flavored milk from school menus, they noticed a decrease in milk consumption. The Milk Processors Education Program discovered that milk consumption drops by 35 percent when flavored milks are removed from the menu.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 9, 2011

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The Cabell County School District of West Virginia was actually forced to bring flavored milk back as a result. Noting the decrease in milk consumption in the district, state officials recommended that flavored milk be restored to the menu.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, the school board brought flavored milk back to the menu when a dairy provider produced a milk product sweetened with beet sugar rather than high-fructose corn syrup.

Regardless of the data, Cooper and other advocates of banning flavored milk from school menus contend that children will drink plain milk if that is all that is offered.

“We’ve taught them to drink chocolate milk, so we can unteach them that,” said Cooper.

Cooper’s statements seem to be in line with those of the behavioral psychologists employed by federal officials to get kids to choose healthier foods in the school lunch line. Last year, [The New American reported](#) that the United States Department of Agriculture gave \$2 million to food behavior scientists so that they may engineer and utilize marketing techniques to trick children into opting for healthier choices. Some of the ideas put forward by the psychologists included hiding chocolate milk behind plain milk.

First Lady Michelle Obama has targeted childhood obesity as her platform, and contends that while Americans are “programmed” to make unhealthy choices, the federal government can “re-program” the personal tastes of Americans.

According to conservative pundit Glenn Beck, Michelle Obama has been influenced by Obama’s regulatory czar Cass Sunstein, author of *Nudge-Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*.

Sunstein’s book outlines a number of measures that can be taken to “nudge” Americans towards healthier lifestyles, even encouraging schools to keep healthy food choices at eye level while placing unhealthier food choices out of sight.

What appears on the surface to be a well-intentioned agenda to improve healthier lifestyles is yet another opportunity for the federal government to usurp the role of parents and impose upon individual liberties. Additionally, as with most government initiatives, banning flavored milk from schools will have unintended consequences, bringing about the opposite effect of what is being sought. One wonders when the federal government will ever learn to limit itself to areas designated to it in the Constitution, among which education is not to be found.



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