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What Foods Should Schools Sell?

Besides school lunches, what foods should schools sell? Views vary. The Agriculture Department is seeking public comment on this controversial question.

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Changes in Child Nutrition

A look at the recent legislative changes in child nutrition—what they will mean to schools, child care centers, and health facilities providing supplemental foods.

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Teaching Kids About Food

There's growing interest in teaching children about food. Two articles tell how teachers, parents, school food service workers—even entertainers—can play important roles.

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Besides School Lunches, What

"Is it morally right to sell away our children's health for a few quick bucks?" —*Dr. Naseeb Shory, Chairman of the American Dental Association's National Task Force on the Prohibition of Confection Sales in Schools*

"If they continue to ban our products, we're going to continue to oppose their regulations." —*Dick O'Connell, President of the Chocolate Manufacturers of America*

"Children do get hungry, but I would support a ban on sales until after the lunch hour. And wherever such foods are sold, the selection should include nutritious foods such as apples, nuts, raisins, or yogurt." —*Sally Williams, mother of four*

When children walk out the door with schoolbooks in hand and pockets jingling with change, will that change buy a meal in the school lunch line or be spent on candy, chewing gum, or soda?

Last April, the Department of Agriculture proposed restricting the sale of certain foods which compete with school meals. Under the proposal, schools could not sell "competitive foods" until after lunch.

Public response to the restriction was immediate. More than 2,000 comments flowed into the Department. While 82 percent favored some type of ban, the comments "raised some significant issues which deserve additional public scrutiny," said Assistant Secretary Carol Tucker Foreman.

As a result, Foreman recently withdrew the April proposal and set up a series of public meetings to get additional public input on the many questions the proposal raised.

Following the public meetings—in Nashville, Detroit, and Seattle—the Department will issue a new proposal concerning the sale of "competitive" foods in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

Restrict sales, yes or no?

The proposed ban on certain foods has elicited widely diverging views on such questions as: How do we determine which foods to restrict? Who will determine which foods to restrict? Do these restrictions infringe on personal rights?

Dr. Naseeb Shory, of the American Dental Association, feels that last year's proposal didn't go far enough. Instead of banning sales of candy, sodas, frozen desserts, and chewing gum until after lunch, Shory feels these foods should be dropped from schools completely.

"Is it morally right," he asks, "to sell away our children's health for a few quick bucks? Why not sell cigarettes or X-rated comic books, if all they want to do is make a few dollars and don't care what they do in the meantime?"

Rather than banning these products, says Dick O'Connell, President of the Chocolate Manufacturers of America, the Department of Agriculture should concentrate on improving the quality of school lunches so they're more attractive and appealing to students.

"An attractive lunch will attract students. An unattractive one will force students elsewhere," he says.

O'Connell also questions inconsistencies in last year's proposed ban. Why, for instance, ban sugar and chocolate in confections and not in other foods, he asks.

Issue raises other concerns

Another aspect of the competitive foods issue concerns the funding of school activities. Many activities now rely on revenues from these foods in order to operate.

Lilly Fulton, student council advisor in Clark County, Nevada, says that if money from the school's beverage funds were cut out, the impact would be great. "Eliminate these funds," she says, "and our activities are

going to go down, even out. We're not going to be able to do the type of things kids like to do—and often come to school for.

"Let's face it. They don't particularly like to learn, but if we can get them in school, they're going to learn," she says.

What responsibility does the Federal Government have for foods sold in schools? This is the question raised by Ernest Clifton, a parent from Garland, Texas.

"I am against the proposed ban primarily because I feel this is not a Federal issue—it's a local issue. The right to have competitive foods in the school cafeteria is a local right. To have, or not have, these foods is the responsibility of local people."

The government's appropriate role, Clifton feels, is simply to make information available concerning the pros and cons of the foods and let people make their own decisions.

Some welcome restriction

Joan Gussow, nutritionist with Columbia State Teachers College in New York, feels, on the other hand, that "taxpayers interest in nutrition should be protected."

"To have these kinds of things—cakes, candy, and soft drinks—available to kids when they compete with school lunch is just being silly."

"To ban these foods is doing no more than any mother who would not let her child have a piece of cake before lunch," she adds.

Gussow makes another analogy. When you try to get children to eat nutritious lunches and at the same time offer them candy and soda, she says, it's "like trying to win the battle with one hand tied behind your back."

Diane Schwindt is director of food service for the Marion Community Schools in Marion, Indiana. For years, the Marion school board has imposed a local ban on competitive foods. Schwindt would welcome either the "all out" approach on a

Foods Should Schools Sell?

ban, or a less comprehensive proposal.

The benefit of any kind of restriction, Schwindt feels, is that "it would make it easier to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods.

"It would relieve the pressure we are feeling from outside sources to serve competitive foods because they are popular with the students."

Examining the issues

The public meetings on the sale of competitive foods will conclude in mid-February. The Department expects to issue a new proposal concerning these foods by April, and the final rule is expected to go into effect before the 1979-80 school year.

The public meetings will focus on developing standards on which a proposed regulation can be based. They will specifically address the possible restriction in terms of health, nutrition education, eating habits, and

local administration and impact. For example:

- On what standards should competitive food sales be evaluated?
- Should standards be based on food composition; on specified nutrient levels of fat, sugar, and salt; or the concept of a balanced meal?
- Would restrictions on competitive food sales increase or decrease lunch participation? Would they affect plate waste?
- Who should be involved in decisions on competitive food sales?
- Should policy differ for different age groups?
- How can school lunches and the school environment best fulfill an educational function?
- What have been local experiences in the area of competitive foods?

Congress first addressed the issue of competitive foods in schools in 1970 when it amended the Child Nutrition Act to give the Agriculture Department authority to regulate the sale of these foods.

Subsequent regulations formalized

a departmental policy that limited foods sold in schools to those which contributed to the Type A lunch pattern or were served as an additional item with the lunch.

In 1972, Congress transferred regulatory authority on competitive foods to State and local officials. However, the law specified that food sales must benefit approved school activities.

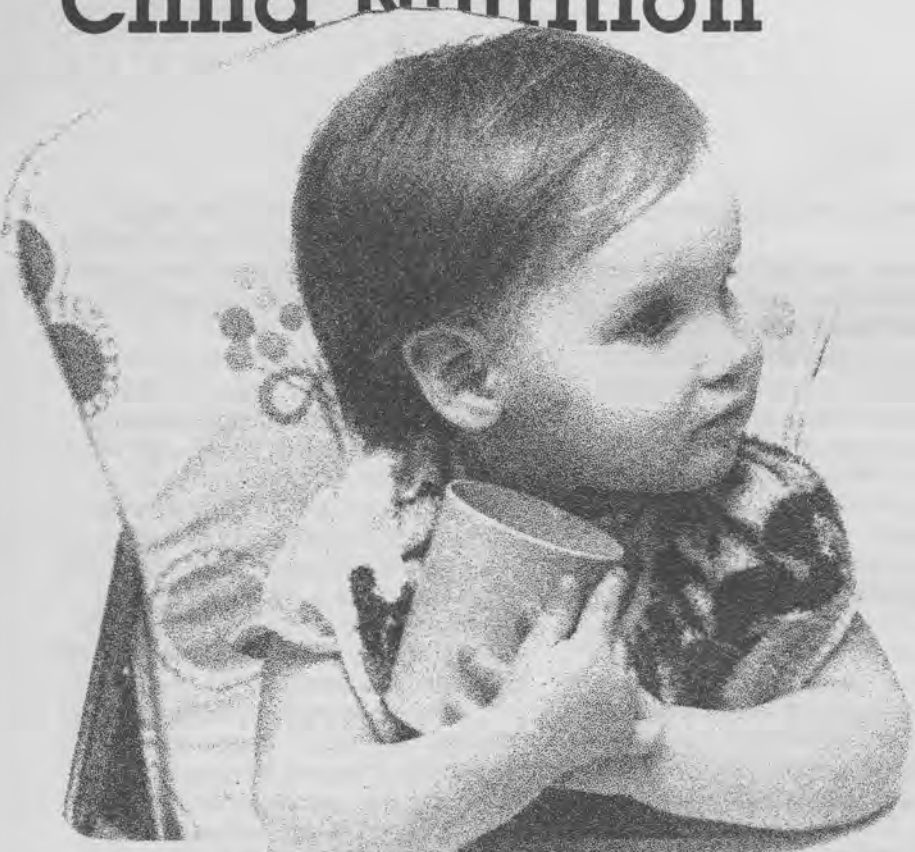
By 1977, there was concern that States and localities had not acted in any great numbers on the competitive foods issue. As a result, Congress returned to the Agriculture Department authority to regulate the sale of competitive foods.

"I haven't completely made up my mind on the issue," says Johanna Dwyer, co-author of a syndicated nutrition column and director of the Francis Stern Nutrition Institute in Boston, "but I'm grateful the Agriculture Department is airing these problems before the public. After all, it is taxpayer's money which supports the school food programs." □

by Dianne D. Jenkins



Changes in Child Nutrition



What would you do if you were 18 years old, expecting a baby, and had to make ends meet with very little money?

You might, if you were unaware of the consequences, try to save money by skimping at mealtimes. A little less meat, fewer vegetables—a candy bar to tide you over.

Your baby might be born with all the problems inherent in its mother's malnutrition. Or it might not be born at all.

Legislation passed by President Carter on November 10 will help prevent this all too frequent occurrence. New amendments to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 extend for 4 more years the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Already serving more than a million people throughout the United States, the program provides supplemental foods and nutrition education as an adjunct to health care. Participants include expectant and nursing mothers and children up to age 5 whose health is threatened by low income and poor nutrition.

The new amendments also extend the Child Care Food Program, provide increased incentives for schools to serve breakfast, and make other changes which will give a financial boost to most child nutrition activities.

Services to be improved

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the new legislation is the 4-year extension of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

"The 4-year extension gives local agencies a sense of permanency and time in which to develop services," said Jennifer Nelson, director of the Food and Nutrition Service's Supplemental Food Programs Division. "We are at the point where we should be doing evaluation projects which would not be feasible over a short period of time. Four years gives us a chance to establish some long term evaluations.

"For example," she said, "some of our clinics send medical data on participating mothers and children to the Center For Disease Control of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. We'd like to expand that. They send such information as

height, weight, pregnancy outcome, incidence of anemia or other problems, and the center does a statistical analysis. This may be one way of further tailoring services to meet the nutritional needs of participants."

More education and outreach

One whole section of the legislation is devoted to nutrition education.

"States will now be required to show that at least one-sixth of their administrative expenses went for nutrition education," explained Nelson. "This should increase the quality of nutrition education and provide less variance from one State to another. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be providing performance and staffing standards."

States will now be authorized to provide nutrition education to parents who are eligible for the supplemental food assistance whether or not they are actually getting it.

New outreach laws provide a mandate for getting word of the assistance to potential participants. The law requires that a public hearing be held before a State plan is submitted to a governor or to the Federal Government to provide the public a say in the way the supplemental assistance is handled.

Changes made in child care food

Several of the new amendments make changes in the Child Care Food Program, which provides Federal cash and food assistance for meals served in child care centers, private homes providing day care, and after-school activity centers.

In a measure expected to increase participation, the legislation streamlines the process of establishing eli-

gibility. "In the past," said program director Jordan Benderly, "child care centers had to be licensed under Federal, State or local requirements, in order to be eligible for Federal help.

"But sometimes because of lack of funds and staffing problems, States did not have enough people to visit all centers applying for licenses. Many just didn't get licensed.

"In some places," Benderly added, "there weren't even any procedures established for getting a license. In either case, the centers didn't get licensed, so they didn't qualify for help—a real Catch 22."

Now there will be alternate methods for establishing eligibility. For example, where Federal, State or local licensing is not available, centers which receive funds under Title

XX of the Social Security Act will now be eligible for assistance. Title XX governs social services including day care. Centers will also be eligible if they can demonstrate that they meet the State or local government licensing or approval standards, or the standards the Agriculture Department is developing in conjunction with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

New funding methods also

As a result of another change in the Child Care Food Program, alternate funding methods will now be available. In addition to the method of receiving reimbursement on a per child basis for free and reduced-price meals, a tiering method will allow child care facilities to receive reim-

bursement under the following conditions:

- When less than one-third of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, child care centers may request reimbursement for all meals at the "paid" rate—that is, at the rate provided for school meals served to children who pay.
- When between one-third and two-thirds of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, the centers may request reimbursement for all meals at the reduced price rate.
- When more than two-thirds of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, the centers may request reimbursement at the rate for free meals.

This tiering method is designed to cut down on recordkeeping requirements for institutions.

"The new amendments also make changes in funding for meals served in private homes providing day care," said Benderly. "In the past, sponsoring organizations could subtract administrative costs before passing on reimbursements to day care providers. In some cases, the providers were not getting the amount of money needed to cover the cost of meals.

"Now with a new food and labor cost factor, each provider will be paid at the same rate, regardless of the ability of the children to pay for meals. And sponsoring organizations will get a flat administrative fee, separate from the reimbursement for the providers.

"The new method of funding can cut down on the amount of record-keeping providers and sponsoring organizations have to do," Benderly continued.

Under current regulations, the Agriculture Department allows family day care providers to claim for food using a food cost factor. Providers can use this factor or claim for actual food used. Providers still have to claim for labor costs; under the new legislation, they'll no longer have to do this.



Other changes in assistance

In addition to changing the way child care centers and day care homes are reimbursed for meals, the new legislation makes three other changes in the way Federal assistance is provided.

The first change will allow the centers the choice of either receiving Federal foods to help defray the costs of preparing meals or, if they prefer, cash in lieu of the foods.

In the past, child care centers did not have this choice, since States could request Federal foods or cash, but not both. Now, States may request a percentage of each, if it is administratively feasible, and ask individual centers whether they want Federal foods or cash.

The second change will ensure timely payment to child care centers by requiring States to make payments in advance, at the beginning of each month. At the end of each month, actual spending will be calculated, and corrections made.

As a result of the third change, organizations which want to sponsor family and group day care homes may be eligible to receive between 1 and 2 months of administrative funds to help them start food services.

Funds for studies

All of these changes are designed to improve the Child Care Food Program and make it easier for eligible centers and homes to participate. The law also authorizes funds for research on ways to make further improvements.

"Perhaps one of the most important parts of the child care legislation is the authorization of \$2 million to conduct some much needed studies," said Gene Dickey, Food and Nutrition Service deputy administrator in

charge of special nutrition programs.

"There will be a study on administrative costs for child care centers, one on evaluation of food quality as it relates to food costs, and a third on the licensing problems faced by the centers as well as private homes providing day care.

The legislation mandates more training and technical assistance by the States as well as outreach efforts.



So more schools will serve breakfast

While the new law passed without a national school breakfast mandate, three measures are expected to encourage participation. They are: joint accounts for lunch and breakfast; eligibility for food service equipment assistance; and minimum criteria for "especially needy."

Until now, schools have had to keep separate accounts for breakfast and lunch in order to be reimbursed. Under the new joint accounting procedure, which is still being worked out, reimbursement will be based on the cost and incomes for both school lunches and school breakfasts. This change will reduce bookkeeping and

paperwork burdens considerably.

"Children need a nourishing breakfast in order to concentrate on what they're supposed to be learning in school," said Gene Dickey, explaining the reason for the change. "The easier it is for schools to serve breakfast, the more children will go to their classes with full stomachs. We'd like to see many more schools offer breakfast, and we think joint accounting will minimize the administrative hassle for schools."

To offer another incentive for schools, the new law makes equipment assistance more accessible to needy schools that will use equipment to initiate breakfast services. The law: (1) makes such schools eligible for "reserved" equipment funds; and (2) increases the portion of equipment funds that are reserved from 33-1/3 to 40 percent.

Reserved funds will go first to schools with no food service and to those moving toward initiation of a breakfast or lunch service.

Other funds will help get food service equipment to schools that have a lunch program but no way of serving hot food, and to schools that need to replace existing equipment or get additional equipment.

Extra help for needy schools

Under the new law, additional schools serving a high percentage of needy students will qualify for higher rates of reimbursement. In addition to regular reimbursement, these schools will get up to 10 cents more for every free breakfast they serve. Schools will be eligible for this extra assistance if:

- they meet their State's requirement of "especially needy"; or,
- during the second preceding year, more than 40 percent of the lunches they served were to children

qualifying for free or reduced-price meals.

Schools with breakfast services mandated by State law will also be eligible for this extra assistance for all free and reduced-price breakfasts.

New income guidelines

In determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, schools and institutions will be using new poverty guidelines. The new guidelines will be based on the non-farm income poverty guidelines prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget.

With this change, all of the Department of Agriculture's food programs will be using a uniform set of income poverty guidelines.

Eligibility for free meals will now be

set at a standard 125 percent of the guidelines. In the past, States could set eligibility anywhere between 100 and 125 percent.

Rate reduced for some meals

The legislation reduces by 10 cents the Federal reimbursement rate for reduced price lunches. Once set at 10 cents below the rate for free lunches, the reimbursement rate now will be 20 cents below the rate for free lunches.

There is one exception. In States in which all schools charge less than 20 cents for a reduced-price lunch, the reimbursement rate will be different. The average reimbursement rate per reduced-price lunch, plus a charge paid by the student, will equal the free lunch reimbursement.

New rates for milk and food

Under the new law, reimbursement rates for the Special Milk Program will be based on the price of milk alone.

"It's simply more realistic to adjust the cost of milk when the cost of producing milk goes up, instead of pricing it according to the Consumer Price Index which throws in labor costs and foods with wide price swings like coffee and sugar," explained Margaret Glavin, director of school food programs.

The same kind of change will apply to the rates for Federal foods used by schools. Both rates, in the past, were based on the Consumer Price Index. Rates for Federal foods will now be based on the actual prices of the five types of food used by schools and institutions. The five types include:

- cereal and bakery products
- meat, poultry and fish
- dairy products
- processed fruits and vegetables
- fats and oils.

"The new method ties the costs to what the Agriculture Department is actually buying, and maintains the level of assistance to the States," Glavin said. States have responsibility for distributing Federal foods—or cash in lieu of foods—to schools and institutions.

More money for States

The new child nutrition amendments increase the amount of funds available to assist States with administrative costs. The law provides for the distribution of these funds on a three-part basis.

Each State will receive:

- One percent of the funds spent for lunch, breakfast, special milk and equipment assistance during the year preceding the last fiscal year.



- An amount equal to 20 percent of the first \$50,000, 10 percent of the next \$100,000, 5 percent of the next \$250,000, and 2½ percent of any remaining funds spent for child care in the second preceding fiscal year.

- A portion of any funds remaining after allocation has been made to all the States. States must use these additional funds to improve management and the quality of meals served.

"No State will get any less than \$100,000 and many States will get more, depending on what their costs were in fiscal year 1978," explained Gene Dickey.

"Although States are expected to use the funds for administering the programs for which they are allocated," Dickey continued, "they may transfer up to 10 percent as needed to improve overall administration."

Improving services

"Many of the changes from this law should help improve administration," Gene Dickey concluded. "And the studies should tell us something about how closely we're coming to meeting the needs of the children we serve."

"They should also help us evaluate ways we can make further improvements," he added.

In addition to the studies on child care described above, the Agriculture Department will conduct a study on the feasibility of requiring schools to offer a choice of menu items within the required meal patterns. After the study is complete, the Department will issue regulations based on the results.

The child nutrition amendments of 1978 hold an expanded promise of food for the Nation's children, particularly needy children. "The States will have to work hard to meet the legislative requirements," said Dickey, "but the Agriculture Department will be behind them with all the help we can offer." □

by Rose Haspadora



Teaching Kids About Food



"Aw, come on, just try a little carrot!"

People who work in school cafeterias have been trying to get kids to eat their carrots for years. Sometimes, the kids did. A lot of times, they didn't, and the carrots cascaded into the garbage.

While cafeteria managers have been anxiously keeping count of pitched carrots and trying to make ends meet, something's been stirring outside the school lunchroom—something which just might get the carrots into the kids instead of the garbage can. The health movement.

Just about everybody—from inner-city youths to factory workers to suburban homemakers—seems to be taking a new look at what they eat and how to stay fit.

Signs of the new food and fitness consciousness are everywhere. Organic and health food stores are spreading like dandelions, while joggers bob through the streets like grasshoppers. Madison Avenue has stuck "natural" on everything from potato chips to shampoo, and publishers are pitching food and fitness books faster than Superman.

While many nutrition experts express concern about the nutritional value of "cure-all" food fads, they are encouraged by people's growing interest in nutrition.

In a recent Yankelovich poll, 77 percent of respondents said they are more interested in learning about nutrition than ever before. They want to know how to fix snacks that are good for them. They want to know how they can eat well and perhaps spend a little less money.

Joan Gussow, author and nutritionist with Columbia University, sees the "nutrition revolution" as a fundamental change in the way we think, feel and act. "We're seeing a new

trend," says Gussow, "toward 'holistic' health—an emphasis on assuming responsibility for our own health and seeking a lifestyle that is health promoting and disease preventing."

But can our concern about food translate into action?

There's evidence it can.

Over the past 10 years, widely publicized research has recommended that people cut down on cholesterol and saturated animal fats to reduce the risk of heart disease. According to a Congressional report published in September, 1978, many Americans have followed these recommendations and changed their eating habits.

Along with increased exercise and improved medical care, the report cites this change in eating habits as a factor in the declining death rate from heart disease—a drop of more than 20 percent in the last decade.

This drop, the report concludes, "belies the widespread assumption that it is impossible to change American habits, including eating habits, for the better. It also indicates that a major chronic disease can be combatted by modifying dietary behavior."

While the report underscores the need for additional research exploring the link between diet and disease, it stresses that one of our most pressing needs is applying what we already know.

Heart disease is far from our only diet-related threat. The four other leading causes of death in this country—cancer, stroke, diabetes and cirrhosis of the liver—are also believed to be linked to the foods we eat.

Over the past 10 years, we've made a small change in the way we



Illustrations on these and the preceding two pages are from *Fun With Good Foods*, an 8½-by 11-inch activity book for children. Available for \$1.90 from the Government Printing Office, the book includes illustrations to color and cut out.

eat. And, we've saved lives that might have been lost to heart disease.

Can we do more? Many people think we can. Congress thinks we can.

Under Public Law 95-166, passed in November 1977, Congress allocated a total \$26 million for State education agencies to use for nutrition education and training.

On an unprecedented scale, State agencies will be using Federal funds to help children, teachers and school food service personnel understand the vital relationship between food and health—to become informed, knowledgeable consumers.

The key to the effort is getting teachers and food service workers together, says Food and Nutrition Service program specialist Nita Anderson.

"We need combined efforts and shared knowledge," she says, "so teachers can teach in the classroom, and kids can act on what they learn—in the lunchroom and at home."

As part of the nutrition education and training, State specialists will be conducting workshops and classes for both teachers and food service workers on nutrition and approaches to teaching kids about food.

At this point, most States are busy assessing students' nutritional needs and preparing nutrition curricula which should be available next year.

Many States are looking for new ideas, new approaches to teaching children about food. Most are working to integrate nutrition information into existing curricula, like math, social sciences and history. Some are planning on introducing nutrition columns in student newspapers and sponsoring health food fairs.

Schools are a logical focal point for teaching children about food. But there are other channels, too. For example, the Department of Agriculture is now exploring the use of media. A test begun in January will develop and evaluate a variety of nutrition messages, including television spots. Aimed at children ages 5 to 12, the test will explore why children select certain foods and how to steer them toward nutritious foods.

Through all of these efforts, we are seeking effective ways to teach children about food and encourage good eating habits, a knotty and complex task. Many nutritionists, researchers, and media experts feel that to accomplish this task we need more information.

A variety of questions confront us such as:

1. What influences form our eating habits?
2. When are we open to having our food habits changed?
3. What is the effect of food advertising on our food choices? The food industry is now spending between \$1 and \$5 billion annually on advertising.
4. Where do people get information about food—their families, friends, newspapers, television?
5. How do we help people make sense out of the present-day maze of contradictory information? "People are aware of nutrition concerns," says Dr. Mark Hegsted, director of the Department of Agriculture's Human Nutrition Center, "but they are confused about all the conflicting advice. We need to come together on what we are trying to say to people."
6. What are the most effective

methods for teaching children about food and changing their food habits?

People involved in teaching kids about food have widely varying opinions about the answers to questions like these. And yet, many share a striking number of similar ideas.

“Children turn off to negatives. We've got to concentrate on foods that are positive and use repetition—just like the ads do. We need to pick specific positive goals and let the kids work toward them—all kids want to be associated with winners.”

Paul Geffert, coordinator, nutrition media project

The food choices we make, says Geffert, reflect more than the whim of the moment, they reflect our attitudes and choice of lifestyle. Changing attitudes requires marketing new attitudes.

As Geffert sees it, we need to sell kids on the idea of being healthy and energetic, on the idea of eating nourishing foods. Geffert feels we need to avoid focusing on foods that are "bad."

"Children turn off to negatives," he says. "We've got to concentrate on foods that are positive and use repetition—just like the ads do. We need to pick specific positive goals and let the kids work toward them—all kids want to be associated with winners."

“We need to build our efforts from one grade to the next. We need to get the teachers and school food service workers interested and involved, and we need to make sure they get the training they need to be knowledgeable and effective.”

Dorothy Callahan, State nutrition education and training coordinator

"Fragmented," is the way Dorothy Callahan describes past efforts to teach children—and school food service workers—about nutrition.

"We need to build our efforts from one grade to the next," she says. "We need to get the teachers and school food service workers interested and involved, and we need

to make sure they get the training they need to be knowledgeable and effective.

"Nutritionists will never reach kids on a one-to-one basis," she adds, "only food service people and teachers will."

In an "ideal" world, Callahan would have a nutrition educator in every school serving as a bridge between the classroom and the cafeteria. In fact, the State director plans to use some of the funds provided by the new nutrition education and training program to try this in several pilot schools.

Dorothy Callahan and her assistant Monya Geller stress the importance of reaching out into the community and involving parents whenever possible. "We have to reinforce at home what we're teaching in the classroom and lunchroom," Geller says.

"We just have to try to remember not to do it all too fast," she continues. "Food habits are so deeply ingrained. It takes time and a lot of

reinforcement to change the way people behave."

The State of Massachusetts has already been busy trying to teach kids about food. A test of children's nutrition attitudes in several Boston schools showed encouraging results.

Several schools which serve breakfast conducted sessions teaching children about sugar and sugared cereals. In a post-test, between 65 and 75 percent of the students who had been taught about sugar refused highly sugared cereals when they were offered them.

In a control group of kids without the nutrition education, acceptance of highly sugared cereals ran from 59 to 87 percent. At the same time, students with the nutrition education indicated acceptance of unsweetened cereals by a whopping 71 to 80 percent. In the control group, only 38 to 51 percent would accept unsweetened cereals.

According to Dorothy Callahan, to be effective in teaching kids about food, you need to involve them. "You can't just sit back and talk to the kids," she says. "The learning has to be active, and food is the most natural learning tool in the world."

"...children will always have a wide variety of foods to choose from—some nourishing, some not. What we need to do is give them the knowledge and encouragement to make the choices that are right for them."

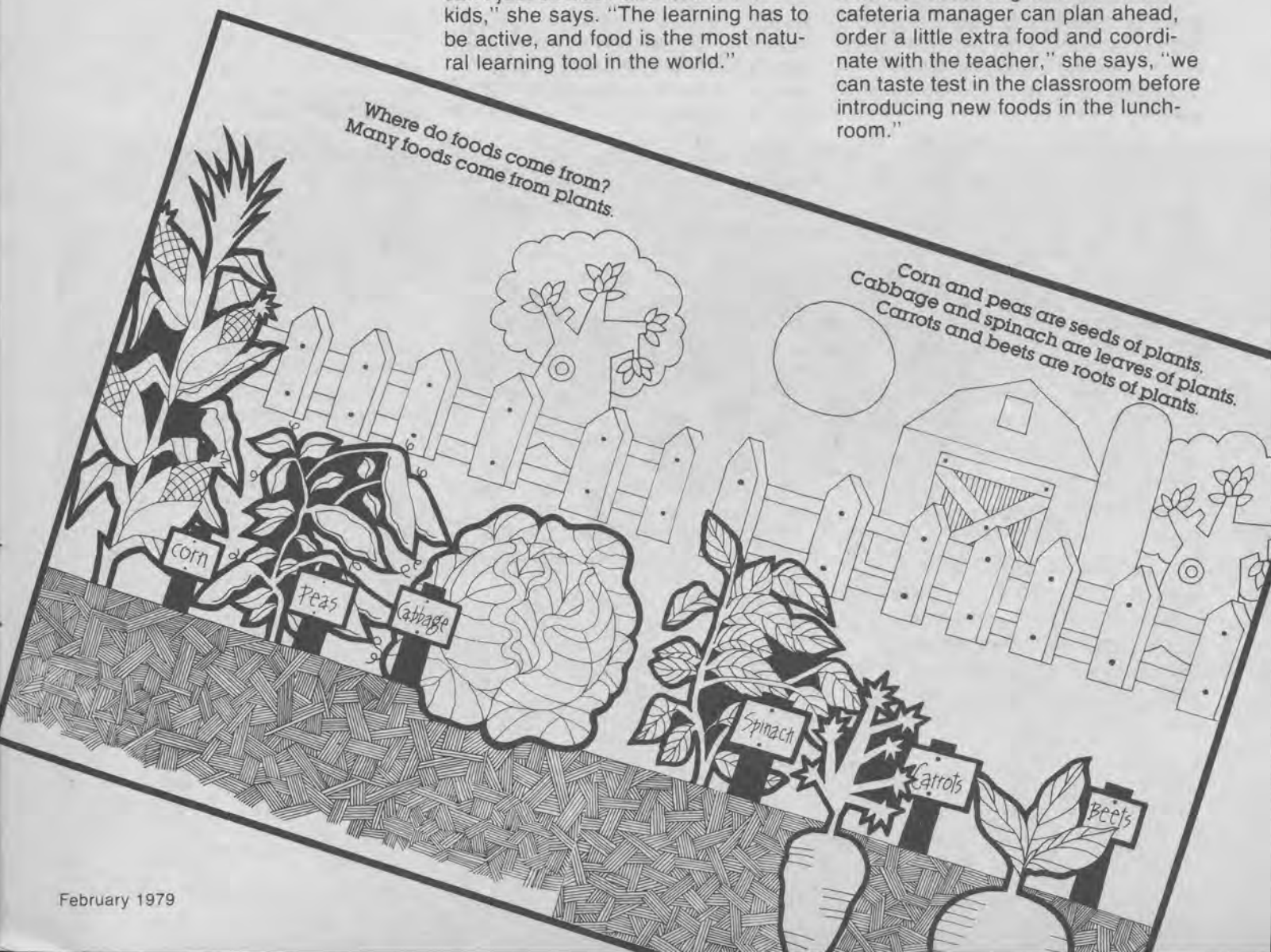
Anita Ellis, nutrition education specialist, West Virginia

"The choice is theirs—for first graders as well as twelfth graders," says Anita Ellis.

"We can't just insist, 'eat your vegetables,' 'drink your milk!' We have to face reality and acknowledge that our children will always have a wide variety of foods to choose from—some nourishing, some not.

"What we need to do is give them the knowledge and encouragement to make the choices that are right for them," she says.

Coordination between classroom activities and lunchroom menus is "a natural," according to Ellis. "If the cafeteria manager can plan ahead, order a little extra food and coordinate with the teacher," she says, "we can taste test in the classroom before introducing new foods in the lunchroom."



"It's important for teachers and cafeteria managers to get across to kids that they're helping them become more independent," she adds. "Research in Salt Lake City revealed that approximately 72 percent of the schoolchildren were fixing their own breakfasts. If Mom doesn't have time to fix breakfast, kids need to know how to do it for themselves. With the parent's help, we can teach them."

A nutrition lesson for kindergartners in one West Virginia school was aimed at doing just that. "We taught the children about breakfast and the types of foods that make a good breakfast," Ellis explains.

Afterwards, the kids were turned loose in a room with a table loaded like a miniature pantry with all kinds of foods. Pick the foods that would make a good breakfast, they were told.

"One little girl—I could have just hugged her," Ellis said. "She circled the table and circled the table. Her eyes were glued on doughnuts, but she just kept circling the table. Finally, she made her choice—cereal, milk, juice, bread and butter."

Will the child make the same choice on her own? "Maybe, maybe not," says Anita Ellis. "But she stands a much better chance of making a wise choice once she understands what the choices mean."

“Many of our children don't understand where food comes from and they need to. They need to know how it comes from the soil. They need to understand why we need to have clean air and water to have good food.”

Joan Gussow, author and nutritionist, with Columbia University

"I don't see how you can even begin considering getting kids to eat good lunches until you improve the lunchroom environment," says Joan Gussow.

Citing the "unbearable" noise levels in some cafeterias as well as the short time allowed for lunch, Gussow raises a problem familiar to many cafeteria managers.

Gussow's concern is indicative of the way she views food education. For Gussow, teaching children about food is simply part of teaching them about the earth and our relationship to it.

"When we teach students 'nutrition' and fail to convince them to eat wisely, we have transferred nothing more than a collection of interesting facts which—in the press of other competing facts—will soon be garbled or forgotten. If, on the other hand, we try to teach students to read critically, to ask intelligently . . . and to act responsibly about food, we may, incidentally, also lead them to make wise dietary choices."

Gussow firmly believes that students need to be aware of the many forces—political, social, psychological, and biological—which control both the availability of food and our food choices.

"We have become so urban that only 7 percent of us provide food for all the rest of us. Many of our children don't understand where food comes from and they need to. They need to know how it comes from the soil. They need to understand why we need to have clean air and water to have good food."

“We need to turn the responsibility over to the child—to let the child take responsibility for his health in mind and body. We need to tell the child: ‘This is your body. It's up to you to build it. Be an artist, make a beautiful creation.’”

Mary Goodwin, health coordinator, Montgomery County, Maryland

When we teach kids about food, says Mary Goodwin, we should be teaching them about themselves.

"We don't have to tell kids to eat foods because they are 'good for them.' We need to show children what marvelous things their bodies are, how our bodies use food and where food comes from.

"We need to turn the responsibility over to the child—to let the child take responsibility for his health in mind and body.

"We need to tell the child: 'This is your body. It's up to you to build it. Be an artist, make a beautiful creation.'"

Mary Goodwin feels that children need to know how to take care of themselves. "When they have control they feel important.

"We need to give them skills—how to manage a food budget, how to buy food, how to prepare simple foods."

"Children are consumers," she points out. "They spend \$2.4 billion annually. Let's tell them how to be good consumers—how to buy a tomato, how to pick out a ripe watermelon."

What's the best way to approach children about food?

"Through the senses," she says unequivocally. "Let's not be too esoteric about this. Nutrients are just

Preschoolers in Clarendon, Virginia, get a lesson in nutrition—outside in their own garden. See story, pages 13-15.

too complex for small children to understand.

"Kids need to be taught how to enjoy food. They need to be able to experience the smells and tastes of real food."

Many rural children, Goodwin says, are culturally richer than their urban counterparts. "They know about wild berries, they grow their own fruits and vegetables. They know what food is and where it comes from."

She feels the best way to teach kids about food is as a vehicle for learning about other things: "You don't teach nutrition per se." Goodwin is sensitive to the many topics competing with nutrition for the teacher's attention and feels that nutrition should be integrated into standard curricula.

"Listen," she says, "food is really

interesting. The more you know, the better it gets. Did you know," she asks, "that potatoes originally came from Peru? And how did they get here? By way of Spain and England."

Goodwin would like to see the classroom become a "supermarket of people" talking about food. "Get the cook in there. Let her tell the kids how she takes a mountain of peanuts and turns them into peanut butter cookies.

"Get your grandmother in there. Let her talk about the foods she ate in 'the old days.' A farmer on the roadside in Georgia taught me everything I know about how to buy good peaches. Get the farmers in there, too! You don't have to have a degree in nutrition to talk good sense about food."

by Dianne D. Jenkins

Preschoolers help themselves, and each other

"Eat your protein," Nathan told his playmate, Jeffrey. "You know it's important if you want to grow big."

When you're a "big fellow," like 3-year-old Nathan Young, you probably feel obligated to advise smaller guys like Jeffrey Kitchens, who's only 2. Nathan and Jeffrey were having lunch at the Clarendon Child Care Center in Arlington, Virginia, where they had learned about protein from a nutrition lesson that morning.

The Clarendon center is a good example of how a day care organiza-



Four...five...six. Children practice counting with raisins and crackers. Theresa Celusniak says she plans many learning activities around food.



tion uses the Department of Agriculture's Child Care Food Program to develop both good eating habits and a surprisingly sophisticated knowledge of nutrition among preschool children.

Like other participating child care centers, day care homes, and afterschool facilities, the Clarendon Center serves nourishing meals with Federal financial and food help.

Variety of activities

"I plan a lot of our learning games around food," said Theresa Celusniak, co-director at the center. "We talk with the children about why we eat certain foods, how we preserve their food value, and what each food item contributes to our health. In a

single day, we may have a science lesson in the garden, counting practice at the grocery store, and learn at the table how food affects us."

Celusniak draws on her career in both home economics and child development to plan educational activities.

As part of those activities, Jeffrey, Nathan, and their classmates help shop for food with the staff. They watch vegetables grow and ripen in a garden on the center's grounds and even help prepare food for their own meals.

In addition to its basement kitchen for serious cooking, the center has a housekeeping corner in the children's playroom. At this sink and counter, children prepare easy dishes. Instructors at the center feel if a child

washes, tosses and dresses a salad, he may eat some of it.

Family style meals are also part of the plan.

"Younger children like Jeffrey are proud to be able to help themselves. They don't want to lose the privilege by refusing or wasting food. That makes it easier to experiment with serving new foods, too, and increases the variety of our meals and snacks," Celusniak said.

Learn by example

When an unfamiliar item is added to the menu, the older children know the rule is that they must at least try it before asking for a second helping of anything else. The younger children learn from the example of their

playmates.

The mealtime conversation resembles an old-time orator's pattern for a rousing speech: "Tell them what they are going to eat, serve it, and tell them what they ate."

Or better yet, let them tell you.

To Nathan and Jeffrey, protein is an everyday word. As meals are served, children are encouraged to name the food supplying protein, or identify the vegetable. When a child triumphantly discerns which vitamin lurks in his lettuce or carrots, the next question is how it works for his body.

Federal aid is helpful

The Clarendon center is one of thousands around the country participating in the Child Care Food Program, operated through State governments by the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Congress first provided funds to improve the nutrition of needy children in child care centers in 1968. In 1975 it extended reimbursement to all nonprofit day care centers where children did not reside and to homes that provide day care for children. Participating centers and homes now get reimbursed by the Food and Nutrition Service for meals at rates based on family income.

Last year, FNS helped provide nutritious meals to 550,000 children daily in day care centers and homes. Like Clarendon, some of those centers use food assistance as a teaching tool.

"I thought the rules might limit what we do," said Celusniak, "but food is a major expense and more resources mean more choices."

That was not her initial reaction. When parents first proposed to seek Federal and State food help, Celus-

niak gave an inward groan: "Here comes the paperwork!" To her surprise (and relief) she found "common sense rules and explicit, simple instructions."

"I found all the materials easy to understand. I'm sure the information would be even more valuable to someone less knowledgeable in nutrition, but it sure helped me organize and apply my knowledge."

"With this help," she said, "We've made nutrition an important part of the education of kids like Nathan and Jeffrey."

"It's really terrific when a child starts learning good food habits, not to please some adult authority, but because he has decided for himself he wants to grow up strong and healthy."

by Wini Scheffler



With guidance from adults, the preschoolers serve themselves—and sometimes each other. Here, Nathan Young helps his friend Jeffrey Kitchens.

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Children need...and deserve...to be nourished. Nourished with food, with love, with opportunities. That's the message of the International Year of the Child. And throughout 1979, we'll be making special efforts to help spread that message with articles on food, help, and activities for children.

