
The Lunch Hour at School

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THE LUNCH HOUR AT SCHOOL

BY
KATHARINE A. FISHER

Prepared for the BUREAU OF EDUCATION *by the*
CHILD HEALTH ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

Illustrations by
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TO YOU
ABSTRACT

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FOREWORD

The campaign for child health has given a new impetus to the school-lunch movement in America. Teachers are beginning to regard the school lunch as a health project that should be given a significant place in the curriculum. This authoritative presentation of the organization of school lunches is therefore recommended to teachers and all others working in the interest of child health. Before this bulletin was written a survey of school lunches in various parts of the country was made, and much of the information received is here included.

It has not been possible, within the limits of one bulletin, to discuss the administration of school lunch systems in large cities, as these involve problems requiring special consideration.



School Lunches and Health: Education

"So the Bird, whose name was Education, started on his journey. He took his brother Rumor with him to help tell the Teachers, because there were a great many Teachers to be told about the Childrens' Health."

—Cho-Cho and the Health Fairy.

THE school lunch is rapidly becoming a recognized part of our school system, and should therefore be established through the use of school funds, with the overhead expenses of conducting the lunch supplied from the same source. The day of the concessionaire is passing, and it can not pass too quickly, as it turns the lunch into a commercial enterprise, with the welfare of the children not the first and only consideration. No school lunch should be conducted at a profit. Even in the larger schools the receipts from the lunches should at the most only cover the cost of the raw food, of service, and other running expenses.

A careful study of school-lunch problems should be made in every school starting such work, as it is of the greatest importance that the lunch should be developed along the broadest possible lines. The cooperation and interest of the entire community are necessary, and the interest of the school boys and girls themselves should be aroused and maintained in every conceivable way. Good organization is necessary for successful work. The problems of organization and administration are here discussed, while the food problems themselves are not considered in detail. Valuable references on diet are available, and a selected list of these is given on page 60 for the benefit of teachers who wish to inform themselves in regard to all aspects of the work. *The knowledge, the interest, and the enthusiasm of the teacher will determine the success of the undertaking.*

No
school lunch
should be
conducted
for
profit





The lunch work should be a vital part of the health teaching in every school. The children who stay at school for lunch need hot food at the noon hour, but that is not all. An excellent opportunity is offered for instruction and training in right food habits, and teachers should take advantage of this to the fullest extent possible. The lunch at school should never become a perfunctory matter. It is not just a question of providing food, but is a means of teaching the boys and girls *to eat in the right way the foods that are good for them.*

Through the school lunch teachers may work very closely with the homes of the community and should know something of home conditions in their own districts. Common errors in the feeding of children are frequently revealed when teachers secure the interest and cooperation of the mothers.

The children may not be drinking their pint of milk a day.

Some children may come breakfastless to school. In some homes the bowl of breakfast cereal may not be given its share of attention.

The diet may be lacking in vegetables. Other children may be given tea and coffee freely and may be allowed to eat too much meat and pastry.

Tact and patience in securing the interest of both mothers and children will gradually correct these errors, and better conditions of nutrition will be established.

The knowledge of home conditions is particularly important among foreign-born families, who usually do not know how to adapt their national food habits to American conditions. We know comparatively little about the various national dishes and their preparation and we do not yet realize how these foreign dishes may

*Happiness
aids digestion*



contribute to our own dietaries. Miss Bertha Wood, of the Boston Dispensary Food Clinic, who has recently made an investigation of the diets of foreign-born families, feels very strongly that such studies are necessary in helping foreign-born mothers with their food problems. Where there is a fair representation of certain nationalities among the pupils, some of their national dishes should be served at school from time to time. It will please and interest both parents and children, and the former will be eager to supply recipes and information as to the preparation of the dishes.

Teachers need not be afraid of teaching food values. Calories, proteins, carbohydrates, and "vitamines" may be new terms for the children, but they can easily be made interesting ones. Lessons should be graphic and should appeal to the imagination. Posters, pictures, songs, and stories should be used freely. The Child Health Organization publishes some attractively illustrated booklets and bulletins which are a delight to all children. In Nebraska a physiology playlet, "How Joe's Lunch Disappeared," is sent out to the boys' and girls' clubs with the suggestion that the clubs use it as a part of their Achievement Day program, and other State colleges send out literature which will interest the children.

Principals of schools can do much in promoting an interest in food and diet throughout the school by including this subject in their talks at assembly periods. Where household science is taught, quite often only the girls receive instruction in food values and in diet. Both boys and girls need this, and the boys as well as the girls should take an active part in assisting with the lunch work.

Probably one of the most difficult things to accomplish is to persuade children to eat and like the foods which are best for them. Through mistaken kindness,

*Teaching
Food
Values*

*Training in
Better
Food
Habits*

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*Boys should
take an active
part in assisting
with the
lunch work*





ignorance, or carelessness on the part of the home people they acquire likes and dislikes which become so firmly established with them that they seem at times impossible to change. It is most important that all foods served at school should be appetizing and attractive. In order to tempt the children to acquire a taste for vegetables, a resort to "camouflage" is sometimes necessary. The taste is more easily acquired through the use of full-flavored cream soups and purees instead of through the use of vegetables in more obvious forms. As stated above, a friendly cooperation with the parents should be carried on, as children must be impressed with the importance of eating the same types of food at home.

Special Nutrition Work for Undernourished Children

THIS is a problem closely related to, and, indeed, often a part of, the school lunch. Reports show that in some places hot lunches have been started to relieve conditions of malnutrition. One report states:

Among 184 children who were measured and weighed, 174 were 2 pounds or more under normal weight. These, in most cases, reported a diet of bread, macaroni, tea, coffee, and little or no milk. A hot lunch was started by the local home economics committee, the farm bureau having appropriated \$100 toward equipment.

This work should be carried on just as actively in the rural schools as in towns and cities, as investigations show a higher percentage of malnutrition among country children. Statistics concerning health defects of school children show a percentage in malnutrition of 16.6 for country children, compared with 7.65 for city children. These statistics are based on the re-



ports of over half a million children, and are published by the National Council of the Education Association and of the American Medical Association. All school-lunch work should be an important factor in reducing malnutrition, but special attention should undoubtedly be given to children who are seriously undernourished. The intelligent interest and cooperation of the parents are necessary here also, and expert aid and advice are essential. The work may be carried on under the supervision of the doctor and the school nurse. The following are some useful references on the conducting of nutritional classes:

How to Conduct a Nutrition Class. Charles Hendee Smith, M. D.—Child Health Organization, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 11 cents.

Nutrition Clinics and Classes. Frank A. Manny.—Nutrition Clinics for Delicate Children, 44 Dwight Street, Boston, Mass. 10 cents.

Class Methods in Dietetic and Hygienic Treatment of Delicate Children in Pediatrics. W. R. P. Emerson, M. D.—Nutrition Clinics for Delicate Children, 44 Dwight Street, Boston, Mass. 10 cents.

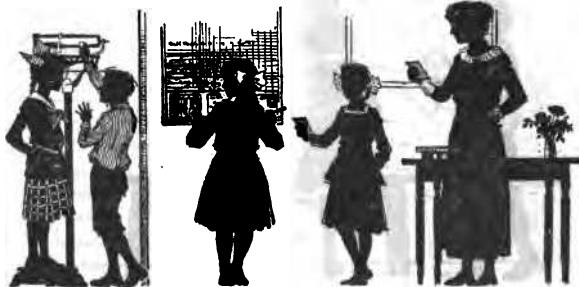
Standardized Physical Examination. W. R. P. Emerson, M. D.—Nutrition Clinics for Delicate Children, 44 Dwight Street, Boston, Mass. 10 cents.

The Social Aspects of the School Lunch

THE eating of food has a social as well as a physiological aspect. The lunch hour at school may be made a cheery, orderly hour for the pupils; and, without unnecessary restraint, good deportment and table manners may be maintained. A visit to some schools during the lunch hour will convince one of the

Hot school lunches of special value to undernourished children

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importance of this. The room should be left in good order by the pupils, and dropping lunch papers or food on the floor, leaving these on the tables, or throwing them *at* instead of in the waste receptacles, need not be tolerated. Teaching pupils orderly habits and respect for school property is, indeed, an important factor in training for citizenship. One consolidated rural school reports:

Through the school lunch we are trying to find a means of helping our community and shall feel, when it becomes a mere mechanical process, that we have lost sight of one of our vital aims. We have already found it our greatest factor in socializing a school whose work was entirely apart from the children's interests.

The decorations and furnishings of the lunch room should be as attractive as possible, with surface finishes that are easily cared for. Plants and flowers add much and can be obtained in various ways.

*Correlation
with other
school
subjects*

The school lunch offers a rare opportunity for sound, spontaneous correlation of the nutrition and health work with other school subjects. The simple account keeping, in connection with the lunch, presents good problems in arithmetic. Applications to geography are very obvious when we consider the distribution of foodstuffs, and posters provide splendid scope for the art class.

Hygiene teaching should function very actively during the lunch hour, much more than it ~~now~~ does. Much difficulty is experienced in maintaining satisfactory standards in personal hygiene, as provisions for washing the hands are limited and in many cases entirely lacking, even in some city schools. In some of the more remote country districts all water used at the schools has to be carried there, sometimes from quite a distance. Naturally this water will not be used, to any great extent, for washing hands, and very little will

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*Teaching
health habits
through
the school
lunch*