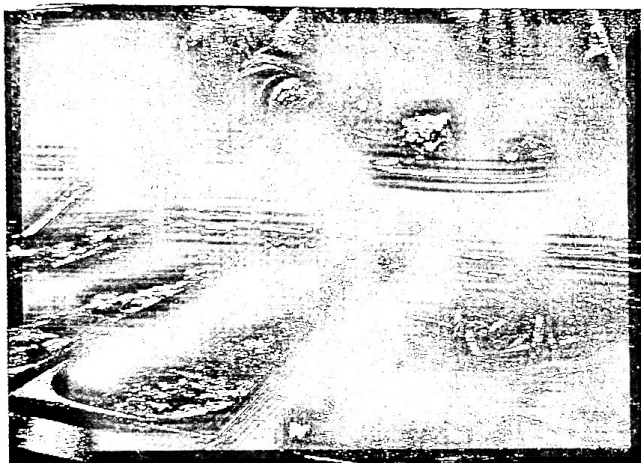


## Teens Take on the School Cafeteria. The Result – a Healthier Student Body!

*Fed up with high-calorie low-nutrient food, students take the lead on reforming their school cafeterias.*

By KC



Alison walked around school after lunch every day with a stomach ache. She felt sick from cafeteria food and knew she had enough! It was time to make a change for the better.

Growing teenagers like Alison, an 11<sup>th</sup> grader at Springfield High School, rely on the school cafeteria to give them a healthy lunch. It seems wrong that a place where students go to get smart only offers greasy mystery food and junk from vending machines. "When you consider good food is proven to help students learn," Alison said, "what are adults thinking when they stock our cafeterias?"

Alison decided that after all these years of suffering, she had to do something about the school cafeteria. Her plan was to help students become healthier, happier and smarter by improving what they ate.

### What are School Cafeterias Dishing Up?

Schools are serving food that parents do not allow at home. If anyone looks around the school cafeteria at MS 421, they will see every parent's nightmare. This cafeteria, like the ones in many middle and high schools, has vending machines filled with soda, chips and other snacks, all missing the vitamins and minerals young people need to grow. Kids need at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day and vending machine food does not help.

That's only part of what is wrong. School lunches are also bad. When asked what is on the menu in a typical week, Mrs. Grody, a school lunch aide at MS 421 said, "On Monday, we're serving spaghetti, corn-arino, and Italian bread. On Tuesday, we will have hot dogs with bean-arinos and fries and on Wednesday, we have beef jerky-arino. Our students are hungry and this food fills them up." This does not sound like a sensible lunch.



### How School Food Hurts Teens

Cafeteria food actually hurts teenagers. Ms. Miller, school nurse at MS 421 reported, "School lunches like these have too many calories and too much sugar, starch and fat. Eating this way can make them overweight and undernourished at the same time." The US Department of Health and Human Services Medline Plus website says that even though there is a lot of food in our country, two out of three people don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. The number of overweight adolescents has tripled in the past twenty years.

**("Teens Take on the School Cafeteria..." continued)**

Child Wisdom reports that children who don't have enough vitamins and minerals get sick more often than children who eat right. The children who do not eat well sometimes also have low math scores, bad memories, confusion and depression.

**Teens Take Action with Some Help**

After trying but failing to get the soda machines out of school, Alison did not give up. She researched the problem and found out about an organization called FoodShare that teaches people how to cook food in a healthy way. Alison formed a club to talk about the cafeteria problem and figure out what to do. The club checked out the school cafeteria food and asked students to give it a grade. As they suspected, the cafeteria food received a grade of F.

With the help of Ms. K, the school's Health teacher, Alison's club launched a plan to make their own lunches, healthier options that they could sell at lunch time. They started selling yogurt-parfaits that had fruit and crunchy nuts, sandwiches on whole grain bread and veggie pita pizzas. Students bought everything they sold and were coming back for seconds.

The project was so successful that club members and their parents soon brought the program to the Board of Education. The Board decided that all the schools in the district needed healthier alternatives and that the school cafeteria menu would be reviewed and changed for the better.

This is not the only school district that decided to improve its cafeteria. Schools in Appleton, Wisconsin, for example, also updated their menu. After teens and parents spoke up, schools got rid of the usual fat filled choices. They replaced them with a salad bar with fruits and vegetables and a hot entrée of chicken, turkey or fish, prepared daily by on-site cooks.

**The Road to Healthy Eating is Possible: Win Win**

Students like Alison and her club members made a difference by coming up with a clever idea that made other students aware of how much better their lunches could be. By taking on the system and getting others to join in, cafeteria food went from disgusting to tasty and healthy. This kind of change is very possible in schools across the country. The way they did this can work for everyone. When cafeteria food tastes good and is healthy for students, they can work harder, feel better and learn habits of better eating and living.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- ① What is the author's claim? Do think he/she is making a valid point within the article? Explain using details
- ② Do you believe that the writer's choice of resources to use to support their claim was effective or ineffective? Explain using details from the text
- ③ How might this argument be more effective? What can you include to make it more effective to your audience? Explain

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