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Professor Sparks

English 1B – Sec. 9

16 April 2015 [updated for MLA 8th ed.]

Research Proposal

My broad topic is childhood obesity, and the focus of my research is to investigate whether making public school lunches more nutritious could significantly help solve the problem. Based on my preliminary research, I believe that making public school lunches more nutritious *would* help, and it may be an easy fix. My target audience will be the principal, PTA, and school board of my little brother’s school in Willow Glen, CA. I’d like to actually deliver my findings as a speech to the PTA before submitting the proposal in report form, but I might also publish it to a national audience later on, maybe as a guest posting on the website of Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move program.

My research questions include these:

* How unhealthy are school lunches now?
* Will children actually eat the healthier food rather than throwing it away and resorting to an unhealthy snack from home instead?
* Why do schools provide such unhealthy food items to their children?
* What role does the school budget play in the quality of school lunches?
* How well informed are public school administrators and parents about the relationship between a child’s nutrition and their mental preparedness for school?
* How widespread are school gardens and nutrition programs?
* How effective are they in improving the quality of school lunches?

Annotated Bibliography

Confessore, Nicholas. "How School Lunch Became the Latest Political Battleground." *New York Times.* New York Times. 12 Oct. 2014, *The Food Issue*: MM44. Print.

This article, originally published in the New York Times, discusses the starting point and motivation behind Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" program as well as results from various schools using this program and the advantages/disadvantages of the program as a whole. It addresses and recognizes the nation-wide problems regarding poor nutrition, as well as obesity and other nutrition-related diseases. It concludes that while not all nutrition related problems with school lunches have been fixed, the various programs put in place to battle them are turning out to be more successful than planned, including Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” program, which is the main focus of this article.

This source seems to be credible since it was published in the *New York Times* by one of their own political correspondents, Nicholas Confessore.

This article provides me with the facts needed to back up the point I'll make about how government programs are actually working to fight obesity, specifically in schools and among children.

Dunaway, Ann. "National School Lunch Programs: An Interview with a Local Director of Nutrition." Interview with Cindy Culver. *Sweet Surprise*. Corn Refiner’s Association, 17 Oct. 2013. www. corn.org/new-study-fructose-and-added-sugars-should-not-be-singled-out-in-obesity/. Accessed 17 Mar. 2015.

This interview gives direct insight into the quality of public school lunches from the Director of Nutrition Services for Marietta City Schools. The interview discusses what public schools are actively doing to improve the nutrition of the meals offered at their school and the challenges they face. Cindy Culver explains the challenges her school faced and the actions they took to overcome them. Culver also discusses the nutrition of the food her school serves and why they chose to improve their school lunches, as well as how the students reacted to the healthier changes and options. It also shines light upon the endless list of beneficial things happening around the nation to improve school lunches. Culver gives her opinion on whether the various programs are actually working to help fight childhood obesity.

This source seems credible since the author is a registered dietician who has appeared as an expert nutritionist on both CNN and CBS. She is also the leading face behind a company called Dunaway Dietetics and has over fourteen years of experience in counseling people in nutrition. However, since it is posted on a site sponsored by the Corn Refiner’s Association, which would likely have a bias towards products such as High Fructose Corn Syrup, I have to keep that in mind, too.

I will use this interview to derive facts, information, and thoughts straight from someone who works in the public school system to support my thesis. Quotes from this interview will show the perspective of someone who works hands-on which school children and cafeteria food.

Madden, A. M., et al. "A Kitchen-Based Intervention to Improve Nutritional Intake from School Lunches in Children Aged 12-16 Years." *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 26.3 (2013): 243-51. *Ebsco Host*. DOI: 10.1111/jhn.12037. Accessed 16 Mar. 2015.

This article examines an experiment in which school lunches were slightly improved in order to become more nutritious for children. The experiment involved making healthier options more readily accessible to kids and encouraging them to eat more nutritious foods. Some examples include replacing chips and crackers with bananas, carrots, and other fruits and vegetables. The article explains how the experiment actually helped to reduce the children’s’ fat intake; increase their energy output, while also positively encouraging them to eat more fruits and vegetables.

This source seems credible since it comes from a peer-reviewed journal and the experimenter and writer is an active member of the Department of Human and Environmental Sciences at the University of Hertfordshire.

I will use this source’s data to support my thesis that children will benefit from healthier meals at school and action should be taken to promote healthier eating among school-aged children in today’s society.

Schanzenbach, Diane Whitmore. "Do School Lunches Contribute to Childhood Obesity?." *Journal of Human Resources* 44.3 (2009): 684-709. *OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson)*. [www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/journals](http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/journals). Accessed 16 Mar. 2015.

This article discusses whether public school lunches cause or contribute to obesity in school-aged children. It showcases panel data and evaluates the nutritional values of reduced-price lunches for children. The article claims that low-income children whose parents must resort to reduced-price meals are more likely to become obese than those whose parents can afford full-price lunches for their children. It also stresses the importance of the current childhood obesity epidemic in America and worldwide.

This article seems to be credible since it was originally published in a peer-reviewed journal.

I will use this article’s data to support my thesis that childhood obesity is a major issue and improving school lunches may be able to reduce the severity of it and help to fix it.

\*Sifferlin, Alexandra. "Why Some Schools Are Saying ‘No Thanks’ to the School-Lunch Program." *Time Magazine* 29 Aug. 2013: n. pag. *Time Healthland*. [www.healthland.time.com/2013/08/29/why-some-schools-are-saying-no-thanks-to-the-school-lunch-program/](http://www.healthland.time.com/2013/08/29/why-some-schools-are-saying-no-thanks-to-the-school-lunch-program/). Accessed 17 Mar. 2015.

This article discusses the opposing viewpoint of why some schools are refusing to participate in the National School Lunch Program. It stresses that the new, improved, and most importantly healthier school lunch programs may not be the best options for schools in terms of revenue. Many schools lost and are still losing thousands of dollars by switching to a healthier meal plan, and this is one reason why the move to healthier foods may not be the best choice for schools. The article also addresses why many kids do not eat the healthier food, meaning more food is wasted with the more nutritional meal programs. This raises the question of which is the bigger issue, food waste or childhood obesity? The article does well in limiting its bias and showing both sides of the story, even though its main points are against switching to a healthier school lunch program.

This article’s credibility can be recognized through its appearance in *Time* magazine, a well known, and popular magazine whose editors and fact-checking staff can most likely be trusted.

I will use this article to present viewpoints and facts that oppose my own, which I will then contest.

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