

Lunch Programs: The Partial Compensation of Schools Towards Low Socioeconomic Students

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Introduction

- Class-based inequalities perpetuate the inequalities which the lower class continually face.
- The implementation of school lunch programs are beneficial for schools to partake in – especially for low socioeconomic (SES) background students.
- These programs will help low SES students get better access to healthy foods, aide in better academic achievement, and to achieve greater self-efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

- I use Downey & Condrón’s (2016) theories of *compensatory mechanisms* to better understand the compensations that schools provide. I also touch on their theory of *seasonal comparisons* to further understand the framework this project entails.

Findings

- Absenteeism is a chronic problem within food insecure families. According to Tamiru & Belachew (2017), “Students from food secure households were 57% less likely to be absent from school compared to their food insecure peers.”
- This issue presents significant issues for the student as they score lower on exams and have lower overall grades. They also are behind in cognitive development (Tamiru & Belachew, 2017).
- There is a relationship between positive self-efficacy and mental wellbeing of the individual. Therefore, strategies must be implemented to ensure the lasting trajectory towards both [food insecure] and negative psychological outcomes [are] mitigated during childhood” (Godrich et al, 2019).



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Nutrition

France

- Frequency criteria must be met to maintain good standing with the Group d’Etude des Marches Restauration Collective et Nutrition (GEM-RCN).
- This ensures French children will get a balanced and nutritious diet during school hours.

Canada

- Canada has no national food program in place (A National Nutritious School Meal, 2009).

Academic Achievement

- Academic achievement is greatly affected with those of low socioeconomic status compared to their high socioeconomic peers. This is especially prevalent when there is a lack of access to adequate nutrition available to these students.
- Health and nutrition problems have significant association with school absenteeism.
- Food insecurity will also affect the individual’s self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

- Self-efficacy, or the presence of non-disruptive behaviours is significantly reduced in children whose households were food secure than those experiencing food insecurity.
- “Students from moderate and severe food insecure households had significantly lower scores for global self-efficacy to make healthy choices than students from food secure households” (Godrich et al., 2019).

Conclusion & Future Considerations

- Children who are of low SES background have a greater risk of experiencing a lack of adequate nutrition due to the lack of nutritious food accessible to them compared to their high SES peers.
- Future considerations could be made within Canada to implement a national lunch program to remedy the inequalities low SES students experience.

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French school lunch programs follow the guidelines set by the GEM-RCN to provide balanced and nutritious meals to students.

The 15 frequency criteria for school meal service in France [10,13] and the percentage of series fulfilling each criterion among the 40 observed series of 20 meals.			
Criteria	Component(s) Concerned	Expected Frequency	% of Observed Series Fulfilling the Criterion ¹
Starters containing more than 15% fat	starter	4/20 max	82.5%
Raw vegetable or fruit dishes containing at least 50% vegetables or fruits	starter, side dish	10/20 min	70%
Dishes to fry or pre-fried dishes containing more than 15% fat	protein dish, side dish	4/20 max	100%
Protein dishes with a ratio of P/F ¹ ≤ 1	protein dish	2/20 max	55%
Fish or fish-based dishes containing at least 70% fish and having a ratio of P/F ≥ 2	protein dish	4/20 min	60%
Unground beef, veal or lamb, and offal	protein dish	4/20 min	77.5%
Preparations or ready-to-eat dishes containing less than 70% of the recommended weight for the portion of meat, fish or eggs	protein dish	3/20 max	25%
Vegetables, other than pulses, alone or in a mixture containing at least 50% vegetables	side dish	=10/20	27.5%
Pulses, starches or grains, alone or in a mixture containing at least 50% pulses, starches or grains	side dish	=10/20	27.5%
Cheese containing at least 150 mg of calcium per portion	starter, dairy product	8/20 min	77.5%
Cheese with a calcium content of more than 100 mg and less than 150 mg per portion	starter, dairy product	4/20 min	57.5%
Dairy (fresh dairy products, dairy-based desserts) containing more than 100 mg of milk calcium and less than 5 g of fat per portion	dairy product, dessert	6/20 min	40%
Desserts containing more than 15% fat	dessert	3/20 max	95%
Desserts or dairy products containing more than 20 g of total simple sugars per portion and less than 15% fat	dairy product, dessert	4/20 max	100%
Raw fruit dessert 100% raw fruit without added sugars	dessert	8/20 min	77.5%

¹ Ratio P/F = protein (g/100 g)/fat (g/100 g).

Ideally, Canadian schools would implement the Canadian Food Guide in its meal planning for school lunches to ensure proper nutrition is met and healthy foods are paramount in student’s diets.

