

[IMAGE]

Smart Kids

By Editorial Staff

Great news for parents: Schoolchildren are willing to eat healthy lunches. The days of corn dogs, tater tots, sloppy joes and french fries are slowly being replaced with apple slices, turkey hot dogs and vegetables.

For years people have underestimated children's willingness to eat healthier foods and schools' ability to produce appealing, nutritious lunch options. According to a recent University of Minnesota study, school lunch sales don't decline when healthier meals are served. Children will eat fruits and vegetables if they are provided. Moreover, nutritious lunches don't necessarily cost schools more to produce.

Little girl holding a cafeteria tray full of healthy food. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The research, published in the *Review of Agricultural Economics*, evaluated five years of data involving 330 Minnesota public school districts to determine compliance with federal standards for calories, nutrients and fats. Results suggested that nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables actually are less costly than processed foods, which offsets the higher labor costs involved with producing healthier school lunches.

Change is always tough - to make healthy lunches a reality, many school districts will have to adjust by upgrading their kitchens and training their staff to prepare fresh, whole foods in bulk. But if the results achieved in Minnesota can be replicated on a national level, healthy eating at school can finally be a regular part of American life.

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