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**NFSC 360**  
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## **School Lunch Program Observation**

### **Observation: School age child (K-3)**

As you visit an elementary school cafeteria during lunch, observe one child eat a meal.

Note intake, behavior, and plate waste, serving portions and the situation in general.

**Child Name:** Kiernan Scott

**Age of child:** 5.8 yrs. & in Kindergarten

**Place of observation:** Little Chico Creek, cafeteria

1. What foods did the child eat?

- 1 Handmade Ham & Cheese Wrap
- 3 Fresh Orange Slices
- 7 Red Grapes
- 1 White Milk 2%
- 3 Celery Sticks

How much was thrown out?

- ¼ Ham & Cheese Wrap
- 1 Orange Slice
- ½ White Milk
- 2 Celery Sticks

2. Calculate nutrient intake as a percent of the age/gender appropriate DRI. Attach printouts and comment briefly on food/nutrient intake.

Nutrient intake based on one meal	(Lunch)	Daily Recommended Nutrient Intake
Food Energy and Total Kcals	229.0	1243
Proteins (gm.)	12.0	19 g
Carbohydrates (gm.)	26.0	130 g
Total Fiber (gm.)	3.0	25 g
Total Fat (gm.)	9.1	6.4-8.9
Saturated Fat (gm.)	4.1	< 2.5
Monounsaturated Fat (gm.)	4.0	*****
Polyunsaturated Fat (gm.)	1.0	*****
Linoleic (omega 6) (gm.)	0.8	10 g
Alpha Linolenic (omega 3) (gm.)	0.1	0.9 g
Cholesterol (mg)	25.0	< 300mg
Vitamin A (mcg) RAE	86.4	400 mcg
Vitamin C (mg)	23.1	25 mg
Vitamin E (mg alpha-TE)	0.4	7 mg
Thiamin (mg)	0.2	0.6 mg
Riboflavin (mg)	0.4	0.6 mg
Niacin (mg)	1.6	8 mg
Folate (mcg, DFE)	48.7	200 mcg
Vitamin B-6 (mg)	0.2	0.6 mg
Vitamin B-12 (mcg)	0.8	1.2 mcg
Calcium (mg)	294.2	800 mg
Phosphorus (mg)	306.0	500 mg
Magnesium (mg)	36.5	130 mg
Iron (mg)	1.0	10 mg
Zinc (mg)	1.6	5 mg
Selenium (mcg)	15.5	30 mcg
Potassium (mg)	474.0	3,800 mg
Sodium (mg)	582.0	1,200 mg

3. What evidence of social interaction and peer pressure were present?

- Fellow students making comments about lunch menu.
- Lunch attendants hurrying them along.
- Close interaction amongst students (bodies touching in line, no personal space).
- Fellow students wanting to trade a food.
- Playing, socializing, lot's of body gestures in conversation (animated).
- Seems happy with smile on her face and talking with fellow students.
- She is very social.

4. In general, did children receiving school lunch eat better or worse than those bringing home- packed lunches?

On this specific day I think the food options were healthy. Although she could have chosen chicken nuggets she made a healthier choice of a whole grain wrap with ham and cheese, white milk, and various fruits.

I feel in general both school lunch and home-packed lunches were similar. I did notice that most of the school lunch students chose chocolate milk over white milk and not many chose 100% juice, although it was available. Students that brought their lunch had Gatorade, Sunny D (juice boxes not necessarily 100% juice), and water for their drinks. An occasional cookie in the bagged lunches was observed.

I would say that students made healthier drink choices for school lunch overall vs. bagged lunch, mostly Gatorade, juice boxes, or water. Even though the school lunch drink choice was often chocolate milk, it is still a better option than Gatorade or juice that is not 100% juice.

5. In general, what was the contribution of empty calorie foods to student lunches?

She made great choices for her lunch so she had no empty calorie choices.

Assuming that the mayonnaise was made out of the cheapest processed oil, I'm sure it was probably high in fat and not a lot of nutrient value to it. Other than that I am hard pressed to find anything else with empty calories.

6. What suggestions for improvement of the school lunch program could you make?

- Stop offering pizza, and or chicken nuggets on a daily basis as a fall back.

- Stop offering sausage on a stick with a waffle, French toast, or pancake wrapped around it so it can easily be dipped in syrup.
- Do not offer chocolate chip muffins as a main course for breakfast.
- Make all foods look presentable, such as scrambled eggs in the morning. It should look like you would want to eat it.
- Even though fries and ketchup may be included as a vegetable and/or fruit, do not accept that as a choice for students.
- Provide healthful nutrient dense foods and offer cookies, chocolate milk, pizza, fries, and overly processed foods as a once in a while food, not a daily main course.
- When these foods are offered they should have an ingredient makeover using whole grains for muffins, serving lean meats (i.e. ground turkey for taco meat instead of beef).
- Offer on a daily basis a presentable, yummy looking vegetarian meal that all students would like to eat.

Note: I observed many schools recently, they all had salad bars with at least 4 choices of fresh fruits and 3 choices of vegetables. Some schools had signs up explaining where the food came from and it's nutrient density appropriate for school age students. They were also offering new foods like cranberry beans in the salad bar and some schools offered tasty looking vegetarian choices. I thought this was very promising and worth mentioning. One of my goals or dreams would be to revamp the school lunch programs for healthier options and from what I observed, schools are making pretty good choices, with some old bad habits still around.