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## Cafeteria Food Sucks for All Students, so When Are We Going to Address This Issue in All Schools?

By Shawnta S. Barnes – September 21, 2018



Every school year, suburban parents appear on the news because they are outraged by school lunch served to their children. Let me paint the scene. Parents are appalled by the subpar lunch options. The news station interviews the parents and then the parents find out the school lunch is okay based on guidelines from the United States Department of Agriculture. The school district doesn't want bad press so they vow to work with parents to make changes. A few months later, a different parent, a different school, but the same story.

The fact is school lunch sucks for everyone. In WRTV 6 coverage about the recent school lunch outrage at a few schools in Indiana, parents were outraged because breadsticks with cheese were served as the main entrée. After investigating, the following was shared:

*The United States Department of Agriculture considers cheese a protein, so bread with melted cheese on top or breadsticks with cheese sauce on the side, both meet the protein requirement for a school meal...As far as the quality of the cheese, if the product the school is using contains enough*

*actual cheese to meet the minimum daily requirement, it is allowed to be served.*

“If the product the school is using contains enough actual cheese”...what the hell? Schools are not even serving real food. How much of an actual food product has to be included for it to be deemed fit for students to eat?

This is why my sons are not allowed to eat school lunch. First of all, lunch at my sons' school is \$2.35. I have two children, so that's \$4.70 a day and \$23.50 a week. I make them healthier lunches at home (with real food) for less than that.

Also, I have worked most of my career in schools where the majority of students receive free and reduced lunch. At one school where I worked, there was only one cafeteria lady and the “food” wasn't even made on site. It was delivered in prepackaged containers and kept in a warmer until it was time to put the “food” out for students to eat. Since I had cafeteria duty, kids would frequently show me “food” that was mushy from the condensation that built up from the “food” being in the warmer or “food” that...well it didn't look like food. Don't get me started on the nonripe fruit that was served. The oranges many times were mostly green and students were using and consequently breaking plastic silverware just to get the peel off.

The horrible food conditions in schools where many of the students are poor and/or minorities rarely get any news coverage. Where is the outrage for these students? The bottom line is we have to do better for all students. School should be a place where you and learn, have fun, and eat a nutritious meal that is 100% real food.