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**Junk Food: S.F. School District Considers Ban**

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Add San Francisco to the short but growing list of California school districts that want to get the Cheetos and Mountain Dew out of the classroom.

The San Francisco School Board tonight will consider a nutrition policy that would eliminate the sale of soda and unhealthy snacks in schools by the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year. The measure also would set up a committee to figure out how to scrub unhealthy levels of fat, sugar and salt from breakfasts and lunches served in the district's 114 schools. But it could also cost the district at least \$500,000 per year at a time when all school districts are facing severe financial cuts from the state, administrators said.

Oakland, with 54,000 students, was the first district in the state to attempt to wrestle junk food and soda from school campuses. That policy was approved a year ago. Los Angeles, the second-largest district in the country behind New York, approved a similar policy in August, and the Sacramento school district also is considering a ban on soda and junk food.

**SCRUTINY ACROSS COUNTRY**

School lunch programs nationwide are increasingly coming under scrutiny for their poor nutritional content, but California is the leader when it comes to actually banning junk foods in schools, said Barry Sackin, vice president of the American Food Service Association.

The movement to reduce the amount of fat and sugar available on campus comes at a time when childhood obesity is reaching epidemic proportions. Today's children are

at least 10 pounds heavier than their counterparts 30 years ago; as many as a third of the state's children are overweight, according to state health statistics.

"There's nobody who is keeping count of all these policy changes, but we are seeing more and more districts take up this issue and trying to do something proactively," said Amanda Purcell, who runs child nutrition programs for the Public Health Institute and the state Department of Health Services.

San Francisco school leaders looked at the Oakland and Los Angeles policies when crafting the approach they should take, said Dr. Dan Kelly, a pediatrician and school board member who co-authored the resolution. "This is a parade that's already started," he said.

"It's time now," said Jill Wynns, school board president and co-author of the resolution.

## **NOT A SIMPLE TASK**

But as administrators in other districts have learned, getting rid of junk food and soda isn't as simple as serving healthier food on the lunch line, because there are many sources of food on campus. Fast-food vendors have concessions at many high schools; and school clubs, sports teams, teachers and parent-teacher associations raise money by selling candy, soda and other high-calorie snacks. At some schools, vending machines generate money for specific programs.

"Most people will tell you they are in favor of improving food options for kids, but they're really unsettled about what that means in terms of financial resources and kids being happy and satisfied in school," Purcell said.

In San Francisco, simply eliminating the sale of sodas, salty snacks and pastries in school cafeterias would punch a \$546,000 hole in the school budget, said Pat Saturnio, director of student nutrition services for the district. She said she had no idea how much additional money is raised from sales by various school groups and individual schools.

That's one issue to be addressed by the nutrition and health advisory committee that will be created if the resolution passes. And the committee will try to figure out how to deal with the proliferation of vending machines on school campuses.

"We could just say, 'Take them out of there,' " said Wynns. "Do I want to do that? No. I want some expertise and advice. I feel very keenly the financial impacts with what is going on, but I'm not willing to wait for this. I think we need to put it with other matters in the budget and figure it out."

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