

## **Chapter 75: A Healthy Lunch Every Day: Implementing A Cafeteria Program to Improve Student Nutrition**

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### **Introduction**

The great leader Winston Churchill once said, “Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.” In Saudi Arabian schools, it is our duty to give students a healthy diet, so they can develop into strong individuals and students; in other words, assets for the nation’s future!

One of the important needs in Saudi schools is the presence of a cafeteria that provides healthy meals for students. The school day has become longer in KSA, because it has added hours for activities and the physical education for girls. This longer day makes it even more important for students to have nutritious food during the day to maintain their energy and productivity.

Today, Saudi students are eating a lot of unhealthy food in their school cafeteria. Many schools sell these foods for example: chocolate, salty potato chips and artificial juices. Because of this diet, they have become more vulnerable to obesity and being overweight. There has also been an increase in serious health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and dental cavities (Salman, 2018).

I suggest that the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, develops cafeterias in schools where first, students eat healthy and delicious food thus improving the health of students. Second cafeterias must provide students with healthy food at affordable prices. Third school cafeterias can help find good job opportunities for school neighbors, parents, or those who are able to work but do not have educational qualifications.

Due to these three solutions, students will be healthier, parents will be happier knowing their children are eating well, and healthier children will learn more. People who cannot read or write can now get jobs, reducing unemployment.

To stop students from eating snacks and improve their diet, every school must have a cafeteria that provides healthy meals. At George Read Middle School in New Castle, Delaware, where I did my immersion experience, I saw a big cafeteria with a large staff, and many kinds of healthy food including main dishes, sandwiches and salads. I thought that this was a good chance for students to improve their diet and the parents and members of the community to find employment (Black, 2010). At George Read Middle School, a large cafeteria team was divided into three sections: the manager, the chef and his assistant, and all hold a degree. Then there are those in the category of kitchen staff, who help prepare food as well as the distributing food to students. The third category, the cleaning team, cleans floors and tables after students go to classes.

According to the dietary guidelines for Americans, children need at least a half plate of fruit and vegetable in every meal. Vegetables and fruit must be a range of colors, while meals must

also have at least a certain percentage of whole grains. Finally, food must be low in salt (Black, 2019). The research shows that the availability of healthier school lunches has already improved students' dietary habits (Black, 2016). In addition, there is not much research about cafeterias and local employment, but when Saudi Arabia builds cafeterias, and they are available at school, jobs will be created for parents who have no work, as well as the neighbors surrounding the school. Creating employment opportunities for Saudis of all backgrounds and abilities is one

goal of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 initiative (Vision 2030, 2020).

If students eat unhealthy food they are more likely to develop mental and behavioral problems, as there is a relationship between student behavior and nutrition. For example, in 2008 a Journal of School Health study discovered that fifth-graders eating fast food scored worse on standardized literary assessments (Campbellsville University, 2016). Also, if the students eat food with high amounts of trans and saturated fats, they tend to learn more slowly. Unhealthy food also causes frequent sickness, so students miss class more often. (Campbellsville University, 2016). There is also evidence that high quality, healthy lunches are associated with better test scores. (Anderson, Gallagher & Ritchie, 2018). A 2018 research study found that in years when a school contracts with a healthy lunch company, students at the school score better on end-of-year academic tests (Anderson, Gallagher & Ritchie, 2018). Research says that students' choices change with healthier school lunches (Black, 2016).

Healthy food helps to strengthen children's immunity against disease and thus reduces the rate of absence, and results in better performance in the classroom. Also, having a healthy cafeteria in the school will provide good job opportunities for people who are close to the school or do not have educational qualifications.

The following tables show the plan for implementing the cafeteria program and for evaluating its impact.

Action item – what needs to happen?	Completion date – when will it be finished?	Resources – what is necessary to complete this step?	Lead- who is in charge of this step?	Evaluation – how will the success of this step be measured?
Meeting the school principal.	August 2020 At the beginning of first semester of 2020-2021	Photos Video My action plan	Me	Approval to start cafeteria program
Meeting with school staff to present the idea and asking for their help.	August 2020 During the first semester of 2020-2021	Power point Presentation that explain the idea in Arabic brochures	Me	Attendance at the meeting
Dividing the work of planning the cafeteria between school staff	September 2020 First semester of 2020-2021	List of tasks that must be done Time	Me and the principal	List of roles and responsibilities

Asking parents and companies for ideas for the cafeteria (e.g., what their children would like to eat) and for help with the cafeteria program	September 2020 First semester of 2020-2021	Contact information Time Website	Team (me, principal, colleagues/teachers in the school)	Attendance at the meeting Online messages received Signups to help/join cafeteria committee
Make a budget for the cafeteria program to include salaries, food purchases, materials, etc.	September 2020 First semester of 2020-2021	Money Information about prices	Me and the principal	Completed budget
Employ people to work in the cafeteria. 1-Find a chef – talk to people who have completed the Ministry of Culture training program. 2-Hire two helpers to work with the chef by talking to people in the community. 3-Assign jobs in the cafeteria (for example: cut or prepare food, serve food, clean up)	September 2020  October 2020  November 2020	For both the chef and helpers: Financial resources (salary) Contact information for the Ministry of Culture program graduates.  Contacts in the community	Principal  Chef  Chef	Job descriptions  CV of qualified candidates (degree for chef, experience for helpers)  1 chef and 2 helpers are hired

Collect medical information for students who are allergic to food.	November 2020	The form Time	Team + Chef	List of medical information about food allergies
Create a food menu for (all students – allergic students) and communicate it to parents	November 2020	Theory of nutrition form qualified Sample menu	Team + Chef	Food menu
Research healthy vendors and decide where to purchase food; buy food	January 2021	Food list Money Staff time	Team + Chef	Vendor list Food order Company contract
Share information about the cafeteria with students and teachers in Morning Meeting	January 2021	Brochures for parents posters in schools. Add in the school website PowerPoint Time	Me + School Nurse	Meeting is held
Stop contracts with third party vendors who previously rented the cafeteria and provided unhealthy food	January 2021	Contact information for vendors	The school principal	No more unhealthy food is sold in the cafeteria
Opening for the whole semester – begin serving lunches at school	February 2021 -			Number of lunches served
Educate students about healthy eating in Activity Hour	February 2021	Activity Hour time Activities Videos		Activity Hour lesson plans
Evaluate the	June 2021	Statistic		Survey

success of the idea		Information about absents Parents feedback		Attendance data
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Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes -- Impact		
			Short	Medium	Long
Projector PowerPoint presentation Photos Videos Action plan Planning Time Meeting Time Money Food Machines/materials Contact information for community partners, vendors, etc. Community contacts Theory of nutrition form	Have meetings to explain the idea of a healthy cafeteria	# of meetings held	Job opportunities for the school's neighbors	Students eat a healthy lunch at school each day	Change the culture of what children eat
	Build a team of parents, companies, etc. to give ideas and help with the cafeteria program	# of people who attend meetings	Community partnership with families and companies	Students understand the importance of healthy eating	Create a culture of physical activity
	Make a budget for the cafeteria program to include salaries, food purchases, materials, etc.	# of people who join team to help	Every student has food she can eat safely in the cafeteria	Students' health improves and they are absent from school less often	Each school in KSA will have a healthy cafeteria
	Advertise positions and employ people to work in the cafeteria (chef and helpers)	Budget document	Only healthy food is sold in the cafeteria	Students make healthy food choices in and out of school	Children's health improves
		Job description	Students understand the new cafeteria program	Students lose weight and are able to be more active	Children's educational outcomes improve
		Qualified candidates	Parents support the new cafeteria program		
		1 Chef and 2 helpers are hired			
		List of food allergies			
		Food menu			
		Vendor contracts			
		# of lunches			

	<p>Create menus that are healthy and safe for all</p> <p>Research vendors to provide healthy food</p> <p>Stop contracts with vendors who previously sold unhealthy food</p> <p>Educate students about healthy eating through Morning Meetings, Activity Hour, etc.</p>	<p>served</p> <p># of Activity Hour sessions about nutrition</p>			
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Impact Evaluation

How?	Who?	When?	Why? What are we measuring?
Survey	A number of healthy lunches.	After final plan due date.	The student eats healthy food.
Document review Surveys	People who have found good jobs in the cafeteria	After first semester 2020-21	Whether the program benefits the neighbors and people who don't have degrees
Document review Nutritional data	Menus from the cafeteria	After first semester 2020-21	Whether the food planned for the cafeteria is healthy and safe for all students

Observation	Student lunches	Middle of second semester 2020-21	How much healthy food do students eat or throw away
Surveys	Students Parents	After the second semester 2020-21	How they feel about the changes to the cafeteria program and the food that is served
Statistics	School records	After the second semester 2020-21	How often students are absent from school
Surveys	Students Parents	At the start of the first semester 2021-22	How often students are sick; how active students are; whether students eat healthy at home and understand importance of healthy eating
Document review Surveys	People who have found good jobs in the cafeteria	After first semester 2020-21	Whether the program benefits the neighbors and people who don't have degrees
Document review Nutritional data	Menus from the cafeteria	After first semester 2020-21	Whether the food planned for the cafeteria is healthy and safe for all students
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Surveys	Students Parents	At the start of the first semester 2021-22	How often students are sick; how active students are; whether students eat healthy at home and understand importance of healthy eating

It is hoped that in the future, each school in KSA will have a healthy cafeteria, which will improve the well-being of students, both physically and academically. As Winston Churchill might have said, healthy Saudi citizens are the greatest asset it can have.

## References

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## APPENDIX

### *PowerPoint Introduction to the project*



My professional learning session goals



*Describe the planned school cafeteria program  
Identify several benefits of students eating a healthy lunch every day  
Explain to students and parents why the school is changing the food it serves in the cafeteria*

#### **Activitie 1:**

- : 1- What are the most prominent health problems experience by students?





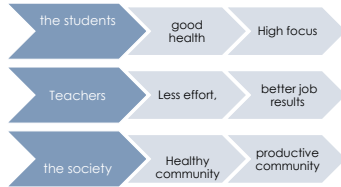
**Why?**

- Reasons 1 - Because many students eat unhealthy food throughout the school day for a period of five days a week, this is very much.
- 2- Because the teacher is the fastest tool for spreading awareness among students.
- 3- The greater the student's ability to focus, the less the teacher's effort in the class, and a healthy diet increases the student's ability to focus.

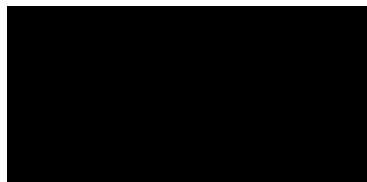
**Activitie 2:**

- - By watching the food that students eat in school, does this food meet the basic development needs of children?

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*This is what the cafeteria looks like*



- **Better nutrition will improve student health, weight and fitness.**
- **Having a cafeteria program can improve our outcomes including attendance.**
- **We must educate children about the importance of healthy eating so that they will make healthy choices both in and out of school**
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