



Delicious and Nutritious Lunches For All

SHANNON HO
Staff Writer

It's no big secret that obesity has reached alarming levels in America. We are the fattest country in the world, with one out of four Americans obese. Obesity is now one of the top causes of preventable deaths, outmatched only by smoking.

Learned habits lead to life-long trends, and now many lawmakers are fighting to fix the obesity problem by starting with our nation's children. First Lady Michelle Obama has publicly declared her stance against obesity, promising to promote education on nutrition and exercise and endorse a healthy lifestyle for children.

Recently, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was approved by Senate, which sets new nutritional standards for schools and provides over \$4.5 billion over the next ten years for child nutrition programs, which includes healthier meals.

The fact that it has taken so long to pass a bill like this puzzles me. Children need to learn healthy habits early on in order for these habits to stick and become ways of life. Even in high school, our lunches are passable at best.

Though our cafeteria tries to adhere to national nutrition standards, the food is greasy, soggy and sometimes strangely colored. What schools around America need is innovation—unique and interesting ways to provide fresh, healthy foods for students without being boring or tasteless.



It is possible to make popular foods such as pizza, nachos and spaghetti with low-fat, wholesome ingredients. Tasteless bags of wilted celery sticks and carrots served alongside tater tots and french fries are unappetizing and not very inspiring.

Much of our school's lunch is packaged, frozen, shipped from a location, and warmed up for our consumption. Some schools make their food from scratch and claim that it costs, more or less, the same than all of the pre-packaged stuff we get. Many of my peers

are turned off by the lack of variety and mediocre taste, so they resort to the vending machine. Fortunately, AHS' vending choices are far healthier than before—all soda is gone from the school, and options such as baked chips and mixed nuts are available.

However, what students eat is not the only problem. Mention physical exercise to the average American high schooler, and most will probably wrinkle their nose and shake their head. We don't take exercise as seriously as we should—AHS

only requires two years of P.E. credits—and that is a major contribution to the high obesity rate in our nation. Educating students of all ages about caloric intake, healthy foods, and being active is crucial to changing our country's obesity issues. I believe that our problem stems mostly from ignorance about just how harmful overeating high-fat foods and lack of exercise can be to the body.

While high school lunches all around the nation have plenty of flaws, I am glad the Healthy Hunger-Free Act targets children. Being young and easily impressionable, they will eat whatever is served to them without really giving it a second thought.

Besides working to provide schools with healthy lunches that consist of more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains, the bill also expands the number of children who are eligible for free or reduced lunch, which means more kids will be able to easily access a more balanced, nutritional diet.

The Healthy Hunger-Free Act is just the starting point of what I hope to be the beginning of a large health reform movement in our nation. It's sad to stand by and watch as our nation slowly eats itself to death simply because of the lack of information and programs available to aid Americans to a healthier lifestyle.

Who knows—perhaps there will be a day when high schoolers and elementary students alike will look forward to eating school food.

Fight or Flight

Groping, defined by dictionary.com as "fondling, touching affectionately," is a staple occurrence at nightclubs, in sleazy MTV reality shows and now in airports? At least that's what travelers are calling it.

New safety measures instituted by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) earlier this year have caused a public outcry against "excessive touching." A Colorado attorney recently filed a lawsuit against TSA officials, claiming his daughter's full body pat-downs were "disgusting, unconscionable, [and] sexual in nature," and another woman accused the TSA of "sexual assault." Which is, you know, entirely plausible. In a public airport. In front of other passengers and airport personnel and security.

I understand what a hassle airport security can be these days. The sighs of annoyance from disgruntled passengers as they whip off their shoes and empty their pockets are evident. Yet, before we continue ranting on about how unconstitutional these safety measures are, we must consider their purpose, which probably isn't aimed to humiliate and mortify travelers, but merely to aid in protecting them.

It has been nine years since the 9/11 attacks shook our nation to the core and a year after the notorious Underwear Bomber incident; Americans have already forgotten the value of flight safety. If the Underwear Bomber lesson taught us anything, besides not to put explosives in your undergarments, it's that terrorists have become more innovative and that nothing is out of the question these days.

Being searched, even aggressively, seems like a small price to pay for a safe flight in comparison to, say, blowing up midair. Travelers are acting as if these searches are being conducted by sex-starved convicts and not professionally trained TSA inspectors of the same gender.

So I plead with the American people to stop crying "rapist," or "Communist," every time they get patted down. Because the alternative to less strictly enforced regulations is no alternative at all. Let the officials do their jobs; they're probably as thrilled about it as you are.

Yvonne Lee,
Editor in Chief

Staff Editorial: No 'Fs' if 'I' is Trying

There will always be reminders of the harsh realities of life—pain, suffering and the possibility of failure. Or not. For some students, the failure (F) grade has been eliminated from the grading system and replaced, ironically, with letters lower in the alphabet: an I for incomplete or an H for held. Students at Potomac High in Virginia and public schools in Grand Rapids, Michigan, no longer have to worry about failing their classes.

This new policy is meant to encourage kids to learn the material rather than moving on after an F. Unlike an F grade, an I or H would allow students to retake the course and earn a new grade, replacing the I or H.

At first glance, this may seem great. In theory, failing students have a second chance, and what's wrong with that? This policy would benefit students who struggle in class; children do learn at different paces, and a

chance to work at their own pace could help them improve. There is also the psychological advantage of seeing an Incomplete rather than a Failure grade. The administrators advocating this plan insist that it would keep kids from being discouraged when they see that big, fat F on their last test. Proponents also hope that this change will encourage more students to learn and stay in school, and decrease drop-out rates. However, it's reasonable to wonder just how effective this policy would be.

After all, taking away the possibility of failing could take away a student's motivation to work. And, of course, not everyone who earns an F is truly struggling—there are the lazy

kids who simply do not care. Students who really work should be able to earn at least a D; it's all but impossible to try hard and still receive an F. It hardly seems fair, then, that a lazy student could fail a class, make it up, and get the same grade or better on

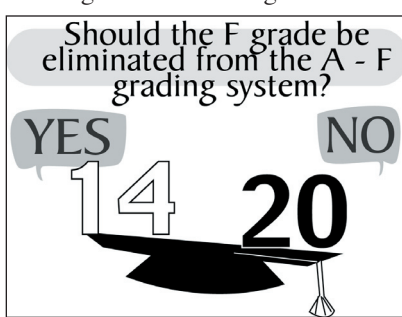
their transcript as a hard-working one. This does not reward hard work, but makes taking the easy way out appealing. If the failing student does indeed have a bad work ethic, an extended deadline only seems to condone this. Allowing students to slide by with a bad work ethic will not prepare them for college, or life for that matter.

However, some school districts do have limitations that make the policy

more feasible. Incompletes are used as placeholders but there are time limits, such as twelve weeks, for making up work. If the deadlines are not met, the student may still receive an F. Students who really care should show an improvement, while apathetic ones would keep failing—in essence, the practice would weed out the ones who truly try.

At Potomac High, an opposition group formed, called "Real World. Real Grades." Many parents believe that their children should know the consequences seen in the world, which include failing. After all, high school should prepare you to be a functional adult, right?

The controversy and disagreement over the new policy caused the administration to repeal it. Perhaps we should take that as a sign before thinking about trying it out here at AHS; for now, failure is still an option.



Sex Ed (for Parents)

JOYCE LAM
Editor in Chief

Lately, teenage sex may seem anything but normal—for parents, at least. On the contrary, I think that teenage sex is more "acceptable" now, than it was before. Although parents may feel the striking fear of their child being involved with a significant other, let alone having sex at such an early age, new studies have shown that teens who are involved and committed in relationships, even sexually active ones, perform just as well in school as those who abstain from sex.

So, how can that be? It appears that being involved in a significant, genuine relationship is actually an encouraging factor to perform well and succeed in school. However, this doesn't apply to those who are involved in a "one night stand" or a "hook-up." Those involved in these casual, in-the-moment flings have a tendency to earn lower grades and are more likely to have trouble in school.

Having sex is a personal decision, and teens have to keep in mind the risks it carries when making that decision. I'm not advocating teenage sex, but I do believe that mature, responsible teens are capable of maintaining both grades and healthy relationships.