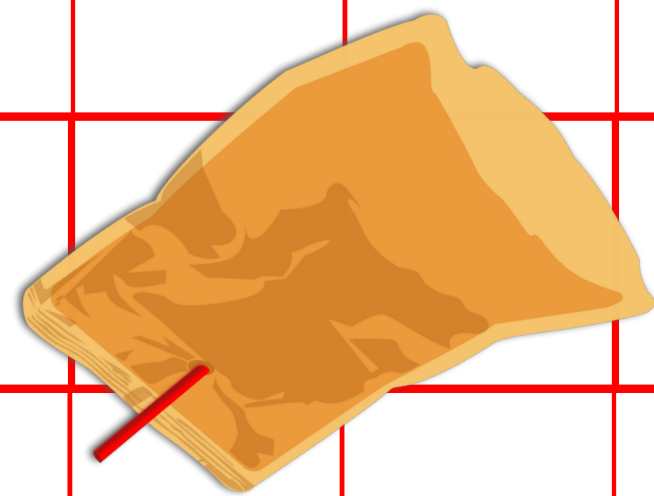


LEFT OVER



EPISODE 5

"It Felt Like You Were Banging Your Head Against a Wall"

60 to 70 percent of total milk sales. That's the share of chocolate and flavored milk students buy in school cafeterias each year. Nutrition workers, parents, doctors, and the dairy industry have debated whether to keep chocolate milk in schools for over a decade.

Reporter Jessica Terrell examines the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 and the fight over chocolate milk to understand why attempts to reform the National School Lunch System often fail.



"My child was in kindergarten and now he's in college... that's almost a generation of kids we just lost during my time of trying to make improvements. **And so how long is this cycle going to continue?"**

-Carrie Frazier

DID YOU KNOW

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 included the first real increases to school lunch funding in 30 years — and amounted to just six extra cents per meal.

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO MAKE THE SCHOOL LUNCH SYSTEM BETTER?



The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 promised to revolutionize the school lunch system and spearhead a fight against childhood obesity. But a combination of stricter nutrition requirements, reduced calorie allowances, and limited school preparation time resulted in countless complaints about too-small portion sizes and unappetizing meals. Students wrote song parodies about being hungry and the hashtag #ThanksMichelleObama coupled with photos of their mysterious looking meals circulated around Twitter. Pushback also came from school nutrition workers, who were initially supportive of the bill but found the 6-cent-per-meal funding increase insufficient to create meals that were both appealing and nutritionally compliant.

Another surprisingly fraught reform effort is the push to ban flavored milk in cafeterias, which has been a contentious issue for over two decades. Proponents of a ban (including some doctors, parents, and nutritionists) say that chocolate and strawberry milk add unnecessary sugar to kids' diets, whereas chocolate milk supporters (including the dairy industry, and some nutritionists and students themselves) argue that flavored milk is essential for getting kids to drink milk and take in its included nutrients. Skeptics, however, say that milk itself is not necessarily a crucial part of a healthy lunch—especially as many students are lactose intolerant.

The fights over both issues point to the numerous barriers to change in the school lunch system. Food industry lobbyists play a large role in both nutrition policy and nutrition education (ever heard of the Got Milk campaign?). Government regulations place multiple layers of restrictions and regulations in the way of nutrition workers trying to make healthy food appealing to students. And limited funding forces nutrition workers to pick and choose what they can do for students, diverting their attention away from education and toward more granular issues, like lunch debt.

The Dairy Industry by the Numbers

Milk producers also contribute about

\$160 million a year

to a fund overseen by the USDA that promotes the dairy industry through things like nutrition education, advertising campaigns, and the creation of new dairy-heavy menu items at fast food restaurants,

Students in the NSLP consumed

35 million

pints of milk in 2019

In the last decade, the dairy industry spent

\$5.2 - \$8.3 million a year

on lobbying Congress.

Dairy industry education campaigns, like the Fuel Up to Play 60 Campaign, reached

more than 38 million students in 73,000 schools

in the last decade, according to a 2018 Congressional report.

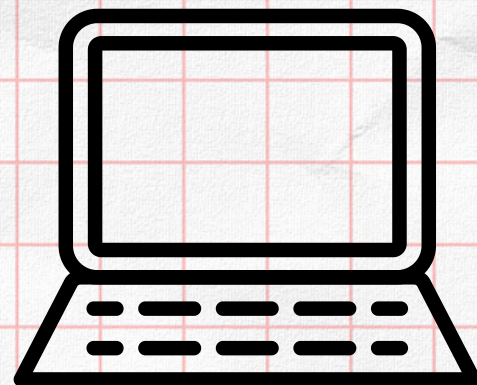
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Listen

[Listen to Carrie Frazier's full StoryCorps interview with researcher Sarah Riggs Stapleton](#)

[Listen to "Food Wars: Marion Nestle vs. Corporate Food" on Christopher Kimball's Milk Street Radio podcast](#)



Explore

Read more about the fraught battle over the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act: ["How School Lunch Became the Latest Political Battleground" from The New York Times](#)

Read about the relationship between lobbyists and nutrition standards: ["Food Lobbies, The Food Pyramid, and U.S. Nutrition Policy" by Marion Nestle](#)

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