

Fatty Foods Flunk Out Of School

Move over, french fries, extra-cheese pizza, and chocolate chip cookies. School cafeterias across the country are trimming the fat!

Last year, 17 states passed new nutrition laws to limit unhealthy foods in schools. Texas officials **nixed**¹ deep-fried foods from school menus. Connecticut lawmakers **banned**² the sale of high-fat, high-sugar snacks in vending machines, cafeterias, and school stores.

Legislators in New Jersey passed one of the toughest school nutrition laws in the country. Next year, no schools in that state will be able to sell foods or drinks, such as candy and soft drinks, that list sugar as the main ingredient. Experts predict that more states will soon follow New Jersey's lead.

So what's prompting the menu makeover? Over the past 25 years, the percentage of overweight U.S. kids has tripled. Today, more than 9 million people ages 6 to 19 are overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

School lunches aren't entirely to blame for the obesity crisis, but many experts say the cafeteria menu is a good place to start. More than 26 million children buy lunch at school each day.

Educators and lawmakers hope that providing good food choices at school will help kids make good food choices at home. "Schools play an important role in improving the nutrition of young people," Julia Lear, director of the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, told *Senior Edition*.

¹ **nix**: to reject; to veto

² **ban**: to forbid, especially by law or social pressure

Reading Passage

Experts say **obesity**³ at a young age can lead to health problems, such as heart disease, later in life. "Childhood obesity just can't be ignored anymore," Lear says.

³ **obesity:** the condition of being very much overweight