

Studies: Cafeteria better than brown bag lunch

By Jane E. Brody, New York Times

Many parents undoubtedly think they are doing the best for their children by having them bring lunch from home instead of eating the lunches served in school. But recent studies clearly prove them wrong.

Home-packed lunches, the research showed, are likely to be considerably less nourishing than the meals offered in schools that abide by current nutrition guidelines for the National School Lunch Program.

That program is, distressingly, increasingly under attack. The requirements for less salt and only whole grains were already reversed in the final federal spending bill approved by the Senate on Dec. 13.

But the program must not continue to be undermined, and more schools should be encouraged to participate. Nearly 32 million of the more than 50 million children in public elementary and secondary schools currently eat school lunches, most of them provided through the program. For about 60 percent of those children, half or more of their daily calories are consumed at lunch.

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