



Columbia Eagles' Watch

Vol. 4 No. 5 ■ Tradition ■ Pride ■ Excellence ■ Feb. 10, 2010



Survey finds conflicting attitudes about cafeteria lunches

By Samantha San

A random and anonymous survey of Columbia students about lunch food in our school's cafeteria revealed some wide differences of opinion among seventh- and eighth-grade students about the taste and nutritional value of the food being served.

Although 46 percent of students overall said the taste of the food is average to excellent, 71.8 percent of eighth-grade students said the taste of the food is poor while only 34.5 percent of seventh-grade students said the same thing.

The difference of opinion between grade levels was also seen in what these students believe about the nutritional value of the food. While 64 percent of students overall think the cafeteria lunches are "healthful" or "very healthful," 59 percent of eighth-grade students think the food is "unhealthful" or "very unhealthful" — an opinion shared by only 10.3 percent of seventh-grade students.

But when it comes to how important taste and nutrition actually are to these

same students when deciding what to eat for lunch, the differences are not as great.

Taste is "very" or "somewhat" important to 57 percent of eighth-grade students and 63 percent of seventh-grade students. Nutrition is "very" or "somewhat" important to 57 percent of eighth-grade students and 66 percent of seventh-grade students. However, nearly 40 percent of students overall reported that nutrition was "not very important" or not important at all.

When asked about the survey results for the taste of cafeteria food, district officials said that tastes can be influenced by experience and what students say to each other about the food. In other words, if students regularly eat fast food with all of its salt, fats, and sugars, then that is what they are going to want. And if one student or a group of students starts saying the food tastes bad, others can be persuaded and they will start to say the same thing.

Some of the complaints, however, are very specific. "I don't like any of the cafeteria foods because sometimes it's burned, tastes greasy, or isn't cooked well," said

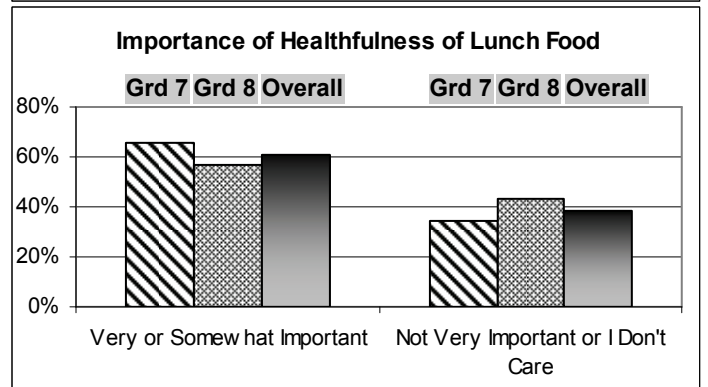
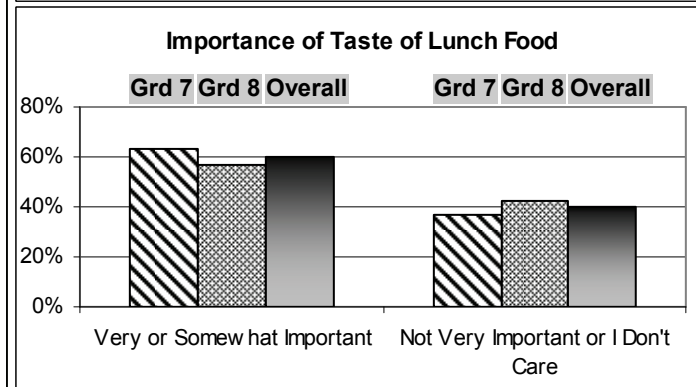
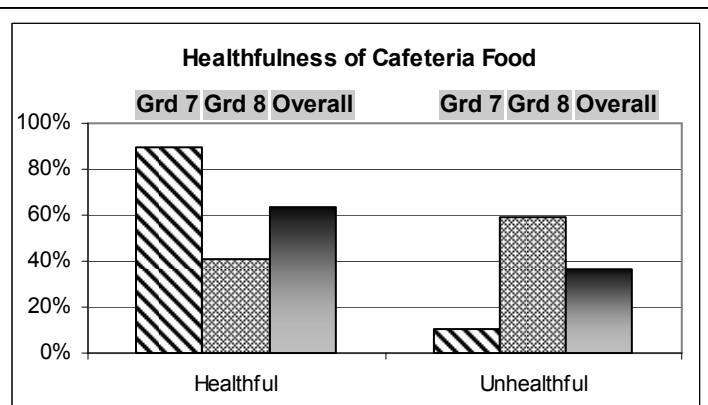
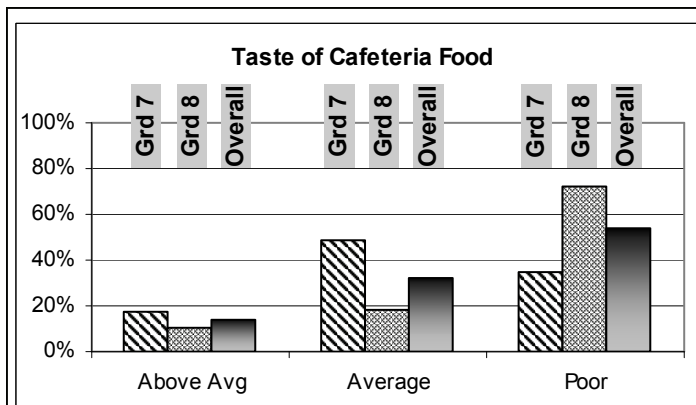


one seventh-grade student. And it's not only students who feel that way. Ms. Rendon, an eighth-grade teacher at Columbia, reported, "Sometimes the food is very greasy, stale, and moldy."

Other complaints are more general. "I waste two dollars to eat food that doesn't even taste good," said Janelle Phung.

Even so, many students enjoy the food served during lunch. "I like the ham salad because it's good," one student commented. Jocelyn Castillo, an eighth-grade student, stated, "I like the fruits in the cafeteria because they're healthy."

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Food fight: two very different points of view

Cafeteria food is 'The Bomb!'

A clear majority of seventh- and eighth-grade students at Columbia rated our cafeteria food as “poor” for taste in a recent survey, and nearly 40 percent of the same students think the cafeteria food is unhealthful. These are not good ratings for a place where more than 450 middle school students go for lunch each day.

But these students are wrong.

To begin with, nutritional value is governed by state and federal law, and the district makes sure it uses whole grains and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Fat content and food preparation are carefully controlled. Besides, things like whole grains, milk, apples, and other fruits and vegetables are the same no matter where they are bought.

Students who say that cafeteria food is unhealthful may as well pretend that all the fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, cheese, and milk bought at the supermarket are unhealthful, something that is clearly untrue.

... all of the food served in the cafeteria has been taste tested by students.

As for taste, maybe cafeteria food isn't your mom's cooking, and maybe it's not as good as eating out at a fancy restaurant, but it's not bad food. In fact, it's pretty good. The turkey and gravy, salads, fresh-baked breads, desserts ... the food is at least as good as fast food — and it's a lot better for you and a far less expensive.

And remember, all of the food served in the cafeteria has been taste tested by students. I think students who say the food is poor are just talking because they're afraid to admit the food really isn't as bad as they claim, and that it's really pretty good. ■



Cafeteria food needs more taste!

The school district (EMCSD) may make sure the food contains whole grains and fruits and vegetables, but the taste of it is not satisfying enough.

And the survey proves it. More than half of the students overall rated the taste of the cafeteria food as “poor.” It's true that the seventh-graders said they like the cafeteria food more than the eighth-graders, but they don't expect as much as eighth-graders. Besides, the seventh-graders are only one of two grades in our middle school.

And the survey proves it. More than half of the students overall rated the taste of the cafeteria food as “poor.”

When students eat food they want to enjoy it and, most of all, love it. Students don't want to eat something that is tasteless, or made with a fast process that doesn't let the taste develop. They do want to eat something that is healthy, but at the same time it must be taste good.

Of course, compared to homemade cooking, the cafeteria food is not that great because homemade food is made with love and hard work.

I think cafeteria food could be good enough if the central kitchen would take some time and improve the taste of the food.

Yes, the price of the food is inexpensive. But is it really worth eating? Again, the majority of students say “no.” And the truth is that anyone can go to a fast food place and get something affordable that equals the same cost as our cafeteria food. Sure fast food places are fattening, but at least the taste of it is good! ■



Food

Con't from pg. 1

Nonetheless, the district knows how important taste is to students, and at least two tools are used by the district to help get food to the students that tastes good. Taste tests are performed wherein students are asked to taste a variety of foods and then give their opinions. What students say is recorded and used; but attention is also given to what students actually eat during the taste tests. If, for example, students report liking a particular food, but then don't eat it, that is also noted.

Another tool is a food-waste study. Each school site is visited once each year. According to district officials, those doing the study carefully watch what students are throwing away — what they're not

eating. If a specific food is not being eaten, district officials report that it is taken off the menu.

District officials are equally concerned about nutrition, and the central kitchen does all it can to deliver nutritious food to students. For example, these officials report that the breads served by the cafeteria are currently 51 percent whole grain, and that percentage is rising. Fresh fruits and vegetables are purchased, and food is carefully handled to make sure that it is safe and does not lose nutritional value.

As for the 36 percent of students overall who think the food is “unhealthful” or “very unhealthful,” district officials believe that is a perception that can be overcome if students are given correct information.

But more is needed. Although more than 60 percent of students overall report

that nutrition is important to them in selecting foods for lunch, that leaves 40 percent who care very little or not at all.

Progress has been made, however.

Because of the leadership of Mr. Scull and Mr. Sham, Columbia school won an award from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. As a result, students are more aware of health and nutrition. Coupled with programs offered by the district, such as the fruits and vegetables delivered to classrooms every week, student are being exposed to new ideas about health and nutrition, but the job is not yet done. Ways must be found to motivate that 40 percent to care more about what they eat.

Detailed results of the survey may be requested. It was taken on Jan. 13 and involved 80 students. The classes were chosen at random. Students may respond to this story with a letter to the editor. ■

Teachers, Students Move to New Building

The El Monte City School District and Columbia School were very pleased to finally open the new building on our campus. Seventh- and eighth-grade students will have most of their classes in the new building. Grades 4-6 have been moved to what had been the eighth-grade rooms.

What is so special about the new building? We asked some students what they thought about the building.

Seventh-grade student Corina Duran exclaimed, "It is super!" Ally Powell and Melanie Patel agreed saying it was amazing and outrageous.

It smells like a new car, but I still enjoy it.

A more cautious reaction came from Tom Lee who said, "It's weird, but it's like a maze."

Some students, like eighth-grader Marcus Gonzalez, were disappointed that the building isn't completely finished. As of this writing, some rooms do not yet have carpet, and the library and new computer labs are not finished. Seventh-grader Michael Trinh was a little more direct: "We should have spent the 21 million dollars on something else," he said.

Many students are not so happy about the stairs, but the teachers have nothing to worry about because they have an elevator. Even so, in the spirit of physical fitness, some teachers do use the stairs.

Like other teachers who moved, the teachers who moved to the new building had to figure out how to find time to make

the move. Mrs. Sham said, "I'm starting to like it, but change is hard especially in the middle of the year. I think I will like it even more when I get carpet in my room."

"It smells like a new car," said Mrs. Sesplaukis, "but I still enjoy it." Mr. Raygoza said, "It's a nice, welcoming environment for students."

"There are lots of great features," Mrs. Zamora-Day said. "There's great technology and the eighth-grade and seventh-grade classes are grouped close together. Plus it feels spacious." Because of the way classes are grouped, students won't get wet in the rain when going from class to class.

Mr. Munoz, our vice principal, thinks it is a great addition to the school. "It's wonderful and amazing," he said.

Many teachers, however, might also agree with Mrs. Sloat who said that there is still a lot of unpacking to do — and that is not much fun.

In addition to the library, Columbia students are now waiting on the opening of the gym, which most students are looking forward to enjoying. We've never had a gymnasium at Columbia, and ours will have a basketball court and many other great features. Another advantage of the new gym will be the ability to hold PE classes indoors when it rains.

The library will be twice as big as the current one — a much-needed improvement which will also allow the library to offer many more books.

Of course, except for those who don't like running the mile, most students are also looking forward to getting our field



back, and so are a few teachers. "I can hardly wait for my homeroom to crush the competition on the football field," said Mr. Mason.

Another thing that students are very happy about is the new restrooms.

Everybody is happy to have everything new. It was a tough week getting familiar with the new routine, but the new building adds humor and excitement, which may lead to a wild year.

Note: Since this article was first written, carpet has been laid in many rooms, the cement hallway floors have been covered, and the library is nearing completion. ■

Around the Campus



Baby Pix, Best of Eagles

You really must have been a beautiful baby, so the yearbook staff is asking students and teachers alike for those cute, funny baby pictures your mom is always showing off.

The yearbook is also look-

ing for the "best of" Columbia's eagles: best eyes, best hair, best smile, class clown, most athletic, cutest couple, and anything else you can think of.

So if you would like to submit your pix for the yearbook, please submit them as soon as you can to Amanda Melendez or Ngoc Nguyen. ■

Valentine Grams

Want to tell your love that you love them but just don't know how? Well, how about with Valentine Grams? Buy

your Valentine grams for only 50 cents. They will be sold starting February 2 during lunch time. Hurry to get your Valentine Grams before they run out! ■

DreamWeaver

DreamWeaver, Columbia's literary and fine arts magazine, is a new addition to the Columbia Media Group. Hopefully the students of Columbia will submit their pictures, poems, songs, stories or other writing so we can have a great magazine. Submit your mate-

rial to Mr. Mason's class! Please submit your work in a computer file. ■

API Goal

Star testing starts in May! Our API goal is 800. In order to reach that goal the students of Columbia Middle school have to study, pay attention in class, and do their homework. We all have to be proficient on the star test in order to be the best school in the district. So, students of Columbia school, try hard to be the best of 2009-2010. Good luck! ■

Avatar: ten-fifty wasted or a lesson learned?

Naomi Ramirez: Pocahontas and Aliens

Even though Avatar was the most expensive movie ever to produce, it was not worth my \$10.50. All it was to me was Pocahontas with Aliens. I mean the action and graphics were great, but think about it — the movie had the same story line as Pocahontas. It just did not capture my attention like I hoped it would. So all the money and time, a lot of time, spent on this movie to me was a waste.

You could have just watched Pocahontas and imagined a few people as aliens and there you go, you would be watching Avatar. ■

Ngoc Nguyen: A Great Lesson

Jake Sully, a former marine now confined to a wheelchair, is recruited to travel in light years to Pandora in search of a rare mineral that is an answer to solving our energy crisis. The avatars are genetically made with a combination of human DNA and Na'vi DNA in order to survive the air in Pandora, which is lethal to humans. Now in his own personalized avatar, Sully's mission is to gain access to the Na'vi and learn to be one of them so the mineral will be in his hands. As his relationship deepens with Neytiri, Avatar teaches us that what we get is what we have given and how we should take care of and preserve Earth. ■

Letters to the Editor

Say "Yes" to Jeans!

Dear Editor,

I would like to give a complement on Samantha's work on her commentary, "Say 'Yes' to Jeans!" I say you did a pretty good job on how you wrote about it. I think it is right that we should have the right to wear jeans, for they are more durable than the fabrics of uniforms. Even though jeans are more expensive than uniforms, I think they are better because they last longer than uniforms; the uniforms get ruined fast and students need to replace it over and over again, making the price of uniforms go up. When parents say uniforms are cheaper than jeans that may not be true.

— Anonymous

More Fundraisers and Activities, Please

Dear Editor,

I think we should have more fundraisers. I think we should have more fundraisers because it would give us more money to have more field trips, dances, and better lunch food. Some ideas for the fund raisers would be selling chocolate or other candies, car washes, or getting sponsors to sponsor our school.

Another idea would be to have more fun activities and competitions during lunch time. Some activities or competitions could be the best picture drawn, or when we get our field back a football tournament. There are many things we could do to get students more interested in school to make it more fun for us.

— Anonymous

School Budget Cuts

Dear Editor,

At this time we are facing a depression throughout America, and it is affecting everything and everyone, including our Columbia school. Therefore, we have had to take some serious budget cuts. These cuts included the elimination of our after-school sports program. For many students this is a serious effect on their activities. The State of California thought this was best for schools during these economic times. Also this led to the layoffs of many hardworking teachers throughout last year.

— Anonymous

No School Dances!

Dear Editor,

I'm very happy that Columbia doesn't support the idea of school dances. I've been to this school's dances in the past and find them very inappropriate. As I have observed I have found both female and male students dancing very provocatively. This school stands for tradition, pride, and excellence, and I find it very disturbing when students' entertainment ruins it.

— anonymous

Dance, Dance!

Dear Editor,

I think we should have more school dances because we've only had two or three. It's important because we should have a little fun along with learning. At dances we can also talk and dance and mingle with everyone we know or have not met yet.

Maya Patel

Letters to the editor are limited to 200 words. Submit letters to Samantha San or Amanda Melendez.

Work at Columbia Continues —



Tearing Up the Field — A small tractor rips up asphalt as part of the effort to prepare the area for its new grass.