

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Report Says Many Youths Are 'Too Fat to Fight', 04/23/2010

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june10/lunches_04-23.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. What is obesity?

2. What are the health effects of obesity?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What did a panel of retired military officers discover?

ANSWER

They found that unhealthy school lunches are making America's youth unfit for military service and therefore pose a threat to national security. Their report, titled "Too Fat to Fight," states that 27 percent of all young adults are too overweight to serve in the armed forces.

2. What percent of young people ages 17 to 24 are unfit to fight and why?

ANSWER

According to the report, 75 percent of young people ages 17 to 24 are unfit to fight in the military because they didn't graduate from high school, have a criminal record or are not physically fit enough. Among these factors, lack of physical fitness keeps the most potential recruits from serving.

3. What does the army physical fitness test require?

ANSWER

The Army physical fitness test requires that an 18-year-old male has to be able to do 42 push-ups in two minutes, 53 sit-ups in two minutes and run two miles in under 16 minutes.

4. What is the national school lunch program. When and why was it established?

ANSWER

The national school lunch program was established in 1946 by the 79th Congress through passage of the National School Lunch Act, which was signed into law by President Harry Truman, who called it a "measure of national security." The National School Lunch Act stipulated that the federal government would pay each

state at least 75 percent of the money that its schools needed for food purchases, with adjustments depending on the average income level of each state's citizens.

5. How have American diets changed over the years?

ANSWER

Americans' caloric intakes have also increased dramatically in recent decades. The average American consumed 2,169 calories a day in 1970, but by 2008, Americans were consuming 2,674 calories daily - a 23 percent increase.

6. Why is it more difficult for school systems to provide healthier lunches with fresh produce?

ANSWER

Fresh fruits and vegetables are among the most expensive foods on the market, and Congress will have to increase funding to schools in order to make such foods affordable for lunches.

7. What is the group of retired military officers asking Congress to do?

ANSWER

The organization that sponsored the report, a group of retired military leaders called Mission: Readiness, traveled to Capitol Hill to encourage lawmakers to reauthorize a school nutrition program that would cut junk food and high-calorie beverages, improve menu quality, make more students eligible for free school meals and improve nutrition education.

8. What is the Obama administration's position on this issue?

ANSWER

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Do you think that young people in America have an obesity problem? Why or why not?

2. Whose responsibility is it to make sure that Americans are healthy? The government? Parents? Individuals? Explain your answer.

3. Do you eat the school lunch? Why or why not?

4. What kind of lunches do you think that your school should provide? What kinds of food would you most like to eat?

5. What might be some other reasons that it is good for American youth to be healthy?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.