

Learning What's "Cafeteria Cool" In School

(NAPSA)—Lunchtime is a serious subject for a number of school-aged kids and their parents. It's the time when students get to relax, have fun with their friends and refuel on nutritious food. What's considered "cafeteria cool" these days? The second installment of the Lunchroom Monitor Survey asked 1,000 moms and 1,000 kids and found out what makes the grade this school year.

At the Top of the Class

According to the survey, parents get high marks for knowing what children are looking for—and even what they talk about—at lunch. Parents think their children will most likely be discussing sports (25 percent), after-school activities (22 percent) and video games (17 percent) while they eat. Those predictions are right on track with kids, who say top table talk consists of after-school activities (23 percent), sports (22 percent) and video games (18 percent).

When asked what was most important to kids when it came to lunch, both moms and kids said taste (97 percent parents; 97 percent kids) and something new and different (54 percent parents; 55 percent kids). While it's no surprise that nutrition matters most to mom (nearly 60 percent claimed that nutrition is the most important factor to her when packing her child's lunch), 59 percent of children surveyed cited nutrition as an important factor when deciding what's for lunch.

Model Student

"Kids want their lunches to taste good and be fun," says registered dietitian Jodie Shield, M.Ed., R.D., who co-authored the "American Dietetic Association Guide to Healthy Eating for Kids: How Your Children Can Eat Smart from 5-12."

Shield says that school lunchtime is the perfect time to reinforce healthy eating habits and teach kids how to make fun, tasty and well-balanced lunches for themselves. She offers the following tips for packing a school lunch



The Lunchroom Monitor Survey found that kids and moms are on the same page on what makes a great school lunch.

kids will eat:

- **Well Dressed**—While the Lunchroom Monitor Survey found that more than 30 percent of kids didn't want plain veggies in their lunch, it's a whole new story when the veggies can be dipped or dunked. According to the survey, vegetables are second only to chicken nuggets when it comes to kids' favorite foods to dunk in sauces. Shield suggests including low-fat yogurt and salad dressings along with a serving of fruit and vegetables in school lunches.

- **Think Outside the Box**—All prepackaged lunches are not created equal. Shield gives Lunchables Fun Fuel high marks because they feature a variety of lunch options that are based on the guidelines of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. They also offer food choices from four of the five food groups.

- **Lunch Box Liberation**—Since kids want lunches that are new and different, avoid getting boxed in by that lunch box. Shield recommends adding an element of surprise, such as substituting a tortilla wrap for bread, to keep ordinary lunches fun and interesting.

For more information, visit www.lunchables.com.