

**Vail School District  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Writing Benchmark #2  
Argumentative**

<b>DIRECTIONS:</b>	Read the writing prompt and information below. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.
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**PROMPT:** Many schools do not allow junk food in an effort to promote healthy habits in students. Other schools believe there may be some benefits in allowing students to have some junk food. Should junk food be allowed in schools? Why or why not? Use specific reasons to support your position.

Your writing should include:

- a prewriting plan/web
- a clearly stated position
- details that support your position
- a beginning that grabs the reader's attention
- a concluding statement
- words that are precise and paint a picture

Remember to edit for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

### **Lunch or Junk?**

#### **Health experts get tough on school lunches**

It's lunchtime at Hall Memorial School in Connecticut, and 10-year-old Haley is making her way through the food line. Many of her friends are thrilled with the day's lunch selections: pizza and French fries and hot dogs. But Haley feels discouraged. "I use four or five napkins just trying to get the grease off the pizza," she says. "Where are the healthy options?"

Health experts are asking the same question. They say foods high in fat, salt, and sugar should be banned from school lunch programs. This includes some items you might not suspect, like fruit punch, which is loaded with sugar, and macaroni and cheese, which is sky-high in fat and salt. "Children are already consuming too much junk food at school and at home," says Jen Keller, a

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dietitian at the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine. "It's important to offer them only healthy items in school."

It's not that health experts want to deprive kids of foods they like best while at school. They just want to help kids avoid many of the health problems that come with eating large quantities of unhealthful food. Health experts and schools do not have the ability to control what students eat at home. Today, 15 percent of children ages 6 to 11 are obese, or seriously overweight. That's up from just 6.5 percent in the late 1970s. Poor diet and obesity can cause diseases like type-2 diabetes, which can lead to blindness and kidney problems. As of a few years ago, this disease was so rare in children that it was called "adult onset diabetes." "Many foods that are offered in cafeterias are linked to these problems," Keller says. Therefore, health experts want to do what they can to influence healthy choices while at school.

Most schools do offer some healthful foods, but experts say that doesn't solve the problem. "Given a choice, most kids are going to choose junk over something healthy," says Pat Thorton, a psychologist who studies obesity in children.

Thorton and other experts agree that schools and parents need to educate kids about making good food choices, both in and out of school. For example, few kids understand that many popular candies, chips, and sodas come in containers that actually contain two or even three servings. And kids need to become skeptical about food advertisements they see on TV and in magazines. "Just because Beyonce sells Pepsi doesn't mean it's a good product for your body," Thorton says.

Of course some kids already seem to know all of this. "The junk food is tempting," says 10-year-old Tim. "But my parents tell me that if I eat healthy now, I'll have strong bones when I get older.

### **Why you Should Let your Kids Eat (some) Junk Food**

You want them to eat food that can be peeled, chopped or juiced. They want something with sprinkles, sugar and enough fat to make it gooey and rich. Most every household and school wages the adults vs. child battle over junk food. But it doesn't have to be that way, experts say.

Charlotte Markey, a health psychology professor at Rutgers University, believes it's better for parents to let children occasionally eat potato chips, candy and other calorie-laden salty and sweet snacks rather than trying to eliminate them from their diets all together.

"I'm certainly not saying that we should load our kids up on junk food," Markey,

author of “Smart People Don’t Diet: How Psychology, Common Sense, and the Latest Science Can Help You Lose Weight Permanently,” told TODAY Parents.

“But we don’t want to make it so off limits during the school day or at home that it starts to have sort of a mystique or appeal.” Markey saw first-hand the results of what happened when junk food was banned at home and school. Researchers first asked parents whether they allowed certain snacks, then brought their children into a room filled with those temptations as part of an experiment. The researchers then made an excuse to leave the room and watched what happened.

Time and again, the kids who were restricted at school or home with snacks ate more treats than other kids and tried to “make up for lost time” as soon as they had access to the “forbidden foods. The lesson for parents and schools is that tight restrictions on junk food seem to backfire, Markey noted.

“It’s well intentioned, I understand,” she said. “What we really want to work on is... navigating (food choices) in a way that doesn’t necessarily mean avoiding all junk food or making it a battle.”

Markey advises parents and schools to explain to children why it’s not good to eat junk food. She also believes negotiation and tradeoffs are part of the process.

Markey lets her kids put light Cool-Whip on fruit, for example, because that makes them eat more nutritious berries. Parents and schools can offer baked instead of fried chips, she said. They can say, “You can have some pretzels, but let’s also have carrots.”

The key to helping children make good choices is to expose them to nutrient-packed foods from an early age and teach them appropriate portions, said Elisa Zied, a registered dietitian nutritionist in New York and author of “Younger Next Week.”

She also believes allowing kids to keep a few of their favorite snacks at home—preferably on a high shelf and behind closed doors—can prevent them from feeling deprived.

“No kid should have to feel guilt or shame when having a treat, especially if he or she is in good health and at a healthy body weight. Still, there should be some limits about how much candy, cookies, ice cream, and chips you keep at home—and they may be too much temptation for some children, so it’s important to help kids decide what’s right for them.





