Snack Machines: Freedom to Eat What We Want

This year, Luther Jackson Middle School faced a controversy. In September, just after students returned from summer break, the principal announced that the snack machines next to the cafeteria would be turned off during the school day. The reason, according to the administration, was student health. Most of the machines sold chips, soda, and sugary snacks, and many parents were concerned about the effects of these snacks on kids’ diets. However, this decision on the part of the principal was a mistake. Students at Luther Jackson should have the freedom to make their own decisions about what they eat, even if they sometimes make unhealthy choices. The snack machines at Luther Jackson should be left on during the school day.

The most important reason students should have access to the machines is because it gives them a much-needed energy boost for their classes. Middle school is much more demanding than elementary school. The classes are harder, the school day is longer, and kids have to circulate from class to class as they move around the building. All of this requires energy. If the students are able to get snacks at the machines during the school day, those extra calories can help them to stay awake and focused on their studies. How many teachers complain about students falling asleep during class? Giving kids access to a bag of chips or a Coke can help solve this problem.

Another reason to allow students to use the snack machines is because many of them get hungry when it isn’t their lunchtime. At Luther Jackson, the first lunch period starts at 10:45; that’s too early for some students. If you’re forced to eat lunch at that hour every day, you might not have much of an appetite; some people’s biological clocks only cause them to get hungry much later. What are you supposed to do if you suddenly feel hungry at 2:00—a more normal lunch hour for some people? However, if the students are allowed to purchase snacks from the machines, this problem disappears. An apple or a candy bar can really make a difference, especially for teenagers, who need a lot of energy at this point in their lives.

Finally, students should be allowed to buy snacks during the day because doing so helps them to develop good decision-making skills. The kids at Luther Jackson are 13 to 15 years old. They are teenagers, on the way to becoming adults. They need to have the opportunity to make their own choices, even if some of those choices end up being unhealthy. By allowing them to spend their own money on snacks, the school is teaching them to be responsible with their eating habits. If adults overprotect their children and fail to give them opportunities to make their own mistakes, the kids will be unprepared for the freedom of adulthood later on.

In conclusion, Luther Jackson needs to turn on the snack machines during the school day. Instead of forbidding access to the machines completely, they should stock the machines with healthy options, like apples, cheese and crackers, and bottled water so that students develop good snacking habits later on. This will be much more educational than just turning the machines off and letting the kids go hungry.