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For my first observation, I watched pre-school children eat lunch. I sat in the Modoc Child Observation Room 127 behind a one way mirror looking in on the children. I picked out one child in particular, Michael, because he seemed to be the leader of the pack. He was the loudest, most rambunctious and seemed to have the most personality out of all of the kids. I arrived in the observation room about fifteen minutes before lunch started so I got to see Michael interact with the other children.

Before lunch, all the children were instructed to sit down and participate in circle time with the teachers. I learned during circle time that Michael was a three year old boy and even though there were older kids present, he was seemingly the dominant male. The whole atmosphere of the pre-school room was very friendly and inviting. All of the kids seemed to get along nicely and they all participated actively during circle time. The college aged workers were very engaged with the kids and responded appropriately to their questions and/or requests. The helpers were good role models for the children and I could tell that the kids looked up to them.

During circle time, there was a sense of community and belonging as all of the children sang songs and responded to what the teacher was doing. As the pre-meal circle time activity came to a close, the teacher dismissed each student by name to go wash their hands. I thought the use of the child's name made it very personal and fun for the children when being dismissed. All of the children washed their hands and then chose where they wanted to sit and eat. Michael chose to sit at a table where there was only one

other boy (the rest were girls) while the other tables consisted of just boys. There was one teacher who sat at each table with the children. At the table Michael was sitting at, the kids were encouraged to take what they wanted and put it on their own plate. However, at the other table, the children were served food to eat. I thought this was interesting because it was completely random where the children sat and thus them serving themselves or being served was random as well. It was very hard to see what the children were eating and practically impossible to tell how much of it they were eating. The menu consisted of Spanish rice, broccoli, 2% milk and bananas. The bananas were sliced and I assumed that Michael ate about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a banana, about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup broccoli and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Spanish rice. I don't think he threw any food away because the teacher was very clear with the children and told them to eat what they decided to serve themselves. He was very eager to eat and all of the children seemed to enjoy the broccoli and the bananas in particular because they kept asking for more.

The teacher at Michael's table was very encouraging and calm with the children. The meal seemed to be a great learning experience for them. The teacher educated Michael about not wearing a hat at the table because it was impolite. When one child (I believe he was autistic) threw a banana peel at Michael, the teachers were very responsive and quickly explained to the child why throwing wasn't ok. The teachers demonstrated how to pour the milk and the children were encouraged to fill their own cups. The teacher explained to the children the importance of drinking milk and eating broccoli because it would make them big and strong. Thus, the atmosphere in the pre-school was one of self sufficiency coupled with warmth and caring that radiated from all of the workers there. The children were very responsive and attentive when the teacher

was talking. When one of the children wanted to be excused, the teacher told him that he must ask to be excused so that she knew he was done eating and the child willingly obliged. When the children were done eating, they were all very eager to wipe off the table with a towel. Michael was the first one to clean off his side of the table and during the time he was cleaning, another girl asked if she could help clean the table as well.

There definitely are some suggestions for improvement that I would make even though overall it was a very pleasant experience. When looking at the children's menu, there was really no protein for lunch. The NSLP dictates that at least 1/3 of the child's protein for the day come from lunch but this requirement was not met with this meal. Unless there was some sort of protein in the Spanish rice that was not listed on the menu, it didn't seem that this meal had any protein in it outside of the milk they drank. Since they are growing children, they need protein so I would definitely suggest the school modify their menu to include more protein. I feel as though this meal didn't offer enough calories either. Michael ate everything and that ended up totaling about 250 calories during lunch. For a kid that needs around 1400 kcals a day (a 3 year old active boy), this meal seems to have fallen short in terms of calories. Also, it is suggested that children over two years old drink only 1% or fat free milk. Children are becoming overweight from other sources and do not need extra fat in their milk. I think the school should move towards providing fat free milk and possibly 1% chocolate milk as an alternative option for the children. I also think that in order to encourage the children to eat their fruits and vegetables, it would be beneficial for the teachers and helpers to eat their healthy lunch with the children. The children look up to the teachers and them setting a good example could really have an impact on the way the children look at food.

For the second observation, I went to Citrus Elementary school and watched third graders eat. The entrées being served consisted of a choice between chicken nuggets, pepperoni pizza or a turkey and cheese sandwich. A salad bar was available to all of the children along with the option of either 1% milk or fat free chocolate milk. The salad bar consisted of lettuce, pickles, applesauce, carrots and celery sticks. Next to the salad bar there was a ranch, ketchup and BBQ sauce pump. The children were handed the entrée of their choice and then they had to serve themselves as much of whatever they wanted from the salad bar. Most of the children ended up taking one of the vegetables offered from the salad bar as well as the applesauce along with their entrée. The child I observed was an eight year old boy named Sam. He chose the pepperoni pizza as his entrée, scooped about ½ a cup of applesauce into a bowl, placed one ounce of pickles from the salad bar onto his plate and selected an 8 ounce low fat milk carton. Because it wasn't that much food, Sam didn't end up throwing anything away. I noticed that most of the children who bought lunch at the school didn't end up throwing much of it away. I think this has to do with the fact that they can decide the fruits and vegetables that they want to take as opposed to it being served to them. Also, because the children ate outside and away from the cafeteria, it was very unlikely that they would go back inside and ask for more food. I didn't see any children get a second serving which I think I would have seen had the children been eating in the cafeteria closer to the food.

There was a lot of social interaction among the children. I noticed that all the boys sat together at one table and all the girls sat together at another table. All of the children with home brought lunches also seemed to congregate together probably because they sat down to eat before all the other children who were standing in line waiting for

their food. I sat down at one of the boy tables where all of them had brought their lunch from home and was very surprised by what I saw. As I watched the boys, I noticed that they talked a lot more than the girls did at the girl table. The boys were very interactive and were very curious to know why I was there. They were very eager to tell me everything that was in their lunches. Because the boys talked so much, this might have taken some of the focus away from their food but they ended up eating most of what was in their lunchbox. Overall, the atmosphere was very relaxed and calm and the children really seemed to enjoy the time they had to interact with one another. There didn't seem to be any pressure or any stigma surrounding the children that bought their lunch at school versus the children who brought their lunch from home.

It is really hard to assess whether the children receiving school lunch ate better or worse than those who brought their own lunch from home. The school lunch choices were not very healthy but at least they had the option of a variety of vegetables and milk. The children who brought their lunch tended to eat a lot more chips, pre-packaged lunches like Lunchables, juice, and dessert. In one child's lunch, he had three tacos from Jack In The Box, Cheetos, a cookie, and a kiwi. On the other hand, a different child ate a turkey sandwich with an apple and juice. It varied from child to child but I would say, overall, home brought lunches tend to be healthier. Even though it's more likely that the home lunches will consist of juice instead of milk and probably a dessert, the entrée seems to be healthier and it's more likely that the child will receive a whole piece of fruit instead of canned or processed fruit. In looking at the lunch menu for the month of November, I noticed that pizza is served as an option every day. So it is very possible that a child may choose to eat pizza every day of the month and if they don't decide to

take vegetables and fruit as well, that may be the only food item they're eating for lunch. At least with home brought lunches there will tend to be more variety, less energy dense and more nutrient rich food.

It is hard to determine what is considered an empty calorie and what's not. I personally consider something like pizza to be an empty calorie food but it was one of the entrée options for the school lunch and apparently met the carbohydrate and protein requirement. However, it was a large slice of pizza and was very greasy so I would consider it an empty calorie food but that's not what the school intended it to be. Also, the children were allowed to pump their own ranch onto their salad or sandwich which I consider an empty calorie condiment. It contributes a lot of fat with few nutrients. There seemed to be a greater proportion of empty calorie foods in the home brought lunches because those lunches tended to contain a dessert whereas the school lunches didn't. There were more cookies and chips in the home brought lunches which contribute to empty calories. I would also consider the juices in the home brought lunches empty calories because they contribute a lot of sugar and energy with little nutrients. Overall, there was just more food packed into the home brought lunches as compared to the school bought lunches.

There are some suggestions I would make to improve the school lunch program. I would suggest that the spoodles used in the salad bar to scoop out the lettuce be changed out for tongs so it'd be easier for the children to grab the food. Also, the salad bar was slightly high and since the kids were responsible for taking what they wanted from it they seemed to have some difficulty seeing the food item and getting it onto their plate. The children also were allowed to pump their own ranch dressing, ketchup and BBQ

sauce onto their salad, chicken nuggets, pizza or sandwich. Letting the kids do this themselves makes it hard to conduct an accurate nutrient analysis and may contribute more fat to the meal than was originally intended. I didn't like the fact that the only fruit that was offered was applesauce. On the menu printout for the month, it said that the salad bar would consist of fresh and canned fruit. However, there was no whole fruit option and the only fruit the child could choose from was applesauce. I think whole fruit should be offered because it has more nutrients and contains fiber which applesauce lacks. There should be more emphasis on nutrition education directed towards the kids and eating healthy should become something that's fun and easy to do. Instead of offering the same food every day, like pizza, a variety of foods should be offered and the children should be encouraged to try foods that they may be unfamiliar with. Instead of just trying to meet the requirements, schools should be focusing on teaching healthy habits to the children by exposing them to new food options while nurturing their mind, body and soul.