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on Nutrition and Physical Activity

Food on Wheels

Youth Task Force

Harvard Prevention Research Center

Who We Are

- We are a diverse group of six young adults from various areas of Boston.
- We were recruited from the Health Careers Academy, New Mission High School, Boston Latin School and the Colonel Daniel Marr Boys & Girls Club.



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YTF Overview

- The YTF researches the eating and physical activity habits of youth, primarily in the Boston area. We hope that the information we gather helps to inform the work of the PRC and its community partners.
- We met weekly from October until May, to work on our projects.



Past Projects

- **2002-2003:** Teaching Planet Health lessons to middle school students
- **2003-2004:** “Where and Why are Youth Eating Fast Foods?”
- **2004-2005:** “Hey, How Do You Feel about Physical Education?”
- **2005-2006:** Livin’ Fit Campaign



2006-2007 Projects

- Canteen Truck project
 - Truck observations
 - School Stores
 - Breakfast Program
 - Focus Group
- Healthy Drink/Corner Store Initiative with Boston Medical Center



Healthy Drink/Corner Store Initiative



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Reasons for Observing

- Many elementary and middle school students go to corner stores before and after school
- The purpose was to see if children can make better drinking choices at the stores.
- We wanted to examine the store prices and location of unhealthy and healthy drinks.
- How can schools and the corner stores help in promoting healthy drinks such as milk and water?



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Stores We Covered

- Tedeschi's (Near Rogers Middle School, Hyde Park)
- ACES (Near Timilty Middle School, Roxbury)
- Ashmont Convenience (Near Wilson Middle School, Dorchester)
- Ortiz's Grocery (Near Mildred Ave Middle School, Mattapan)



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What We Found

- Unhealthy drinks offer smaller servings and so are very cheap (i.e. Teenis and Big Bursts are 25-50 cents), water and juice almost always more than \$1.00
- A lot of variety for unhealthy drinks, not so much for water, juice, milk, etc.
- Easily accessible when you walk into the store
- The majority of drinks are unhealthy.



Canteen Project



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Canteen Trucks Background

- These trucks park close to several public high schools, usually for about 30 minutes before and after school, and sell drinks, snacks, and sometimes hot food
- We worked with trucks at Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, Madison Park High School, O'Bryant High School, and Fenway High School/Boston Arts Academy



Hypothesis

- We assumed that a mass majority of the students were visiting the canteen trucks daily.
- We assumed they were more likely to purchase unhealthy foods/drinks.
- We thought the prices of unhealthy foods would be less expensive.



Observations

- We observed students' purchases: what they bought, how much of certain products were bought, prices of certain products, products' availability and variety.

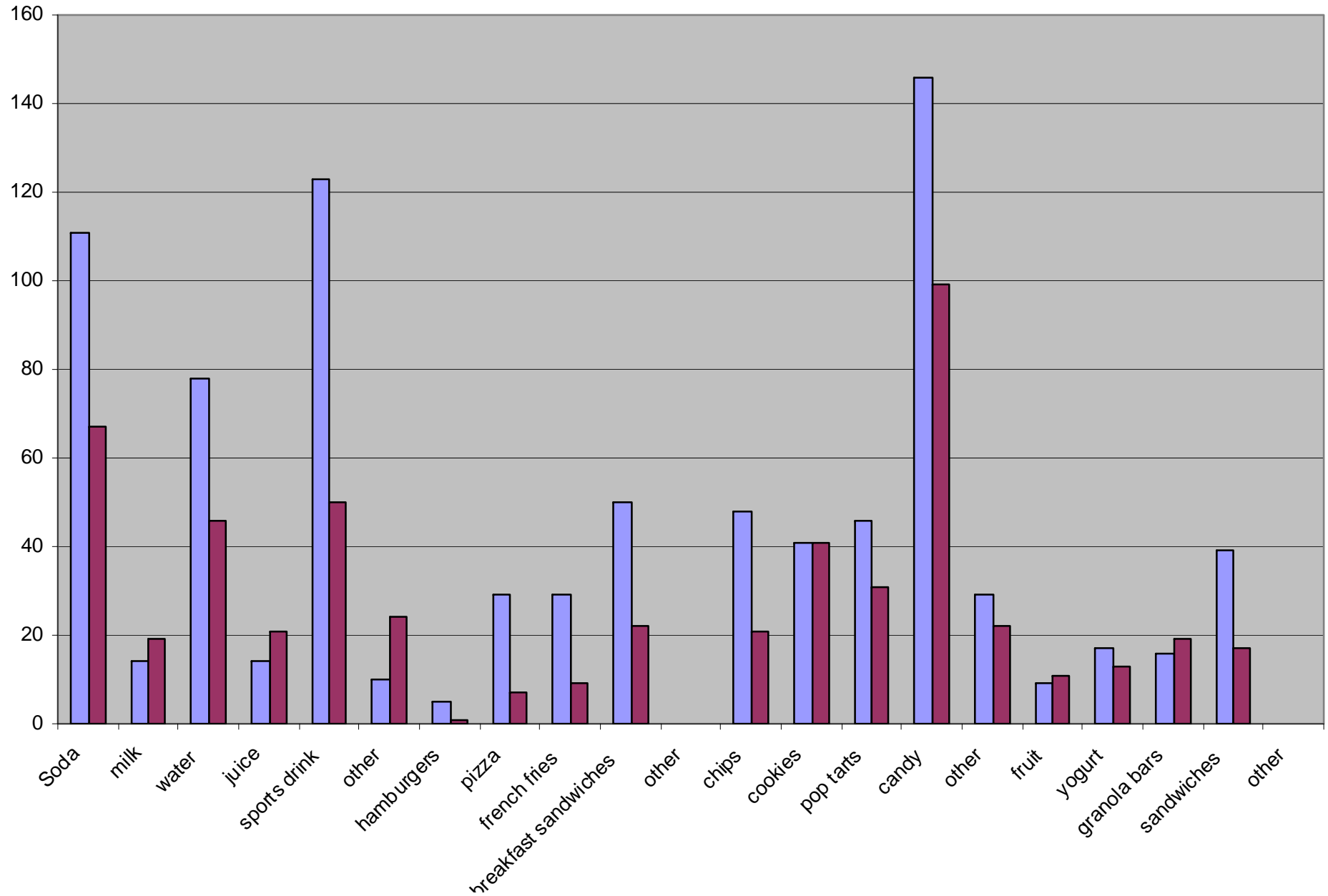


Statistics

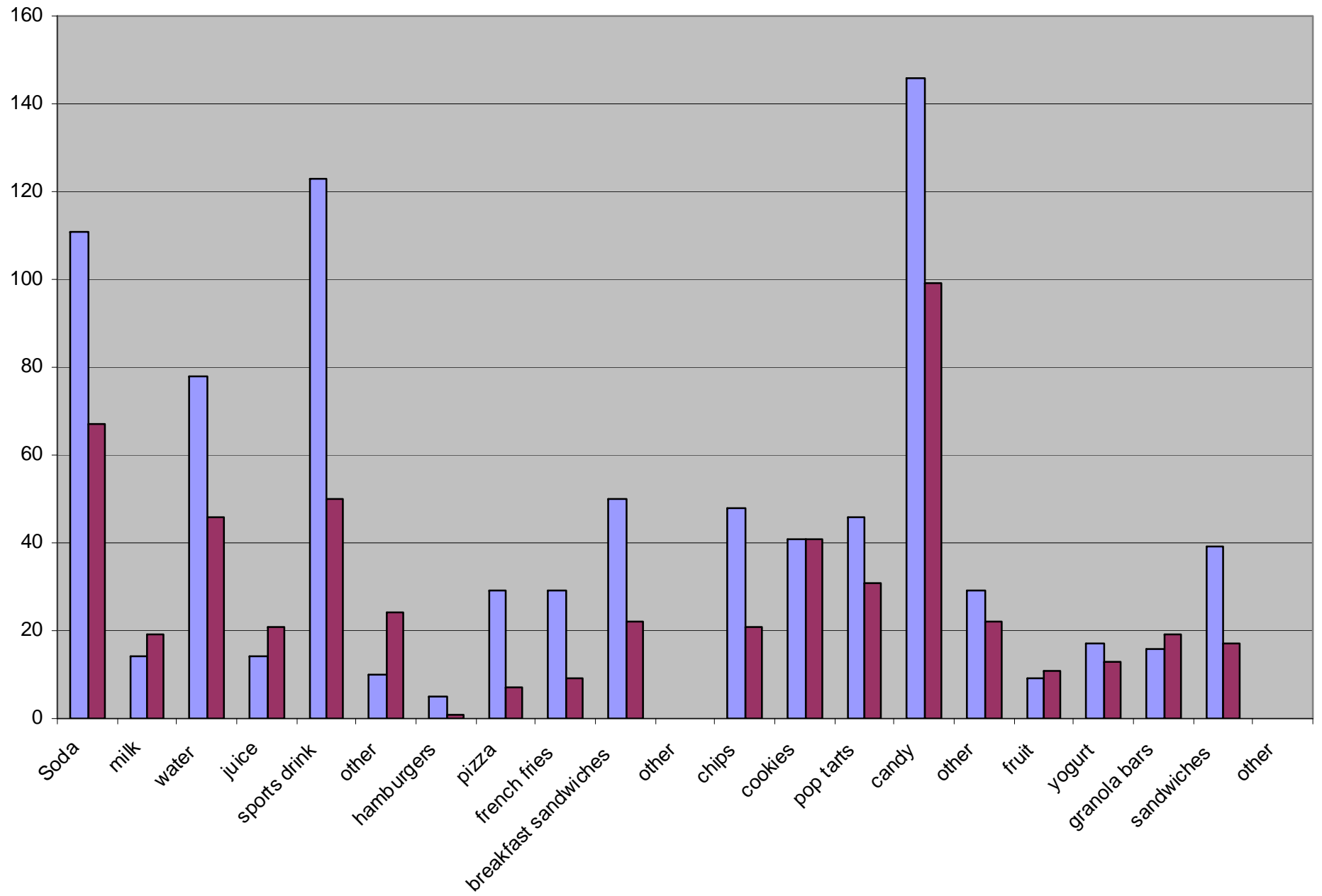
- As expected, we discovered that students are much more likely to buy an unhealthy beverage or snack rather than a healthy one – soda over milk, candy over granola bars, etc.



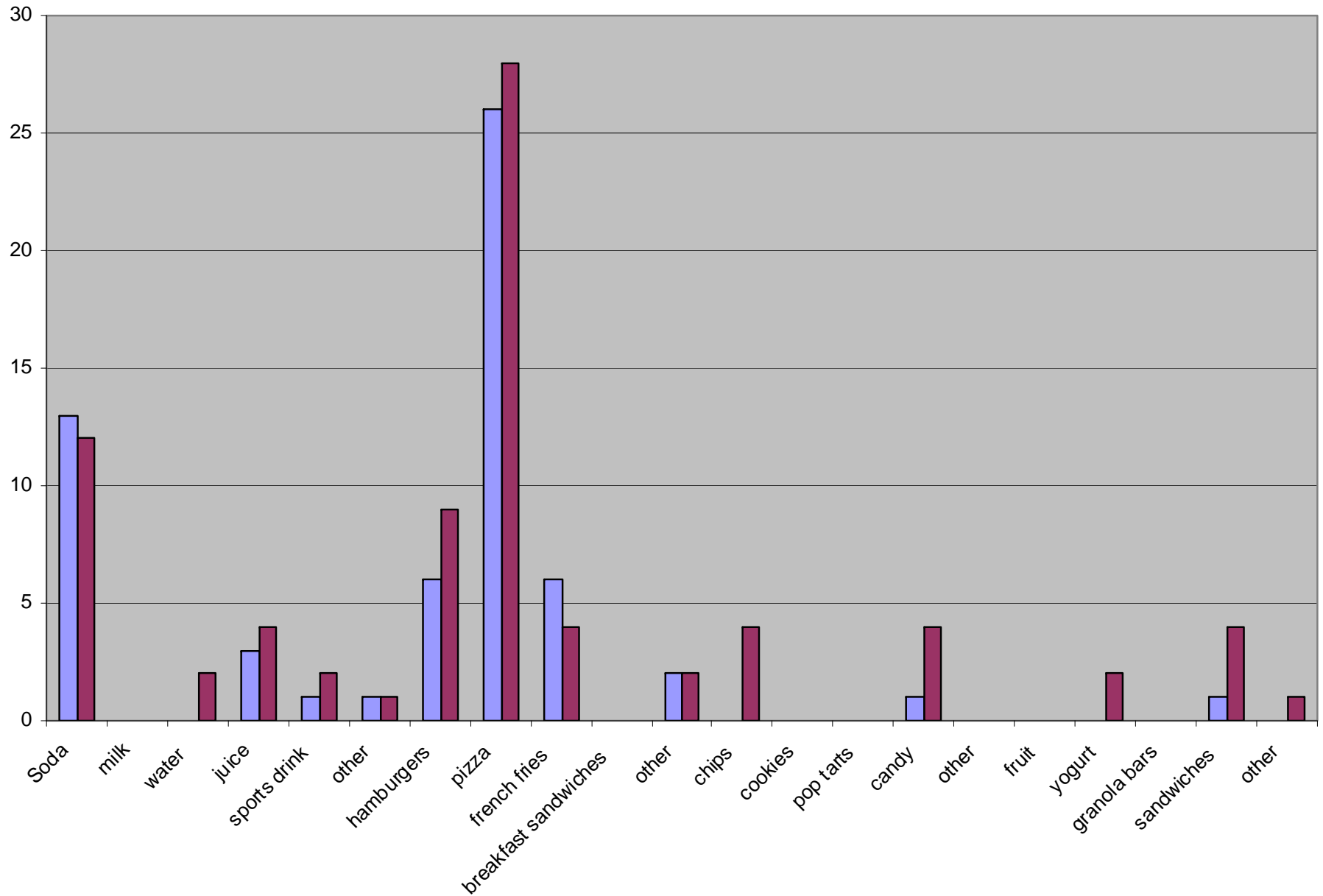
Boston Latin School



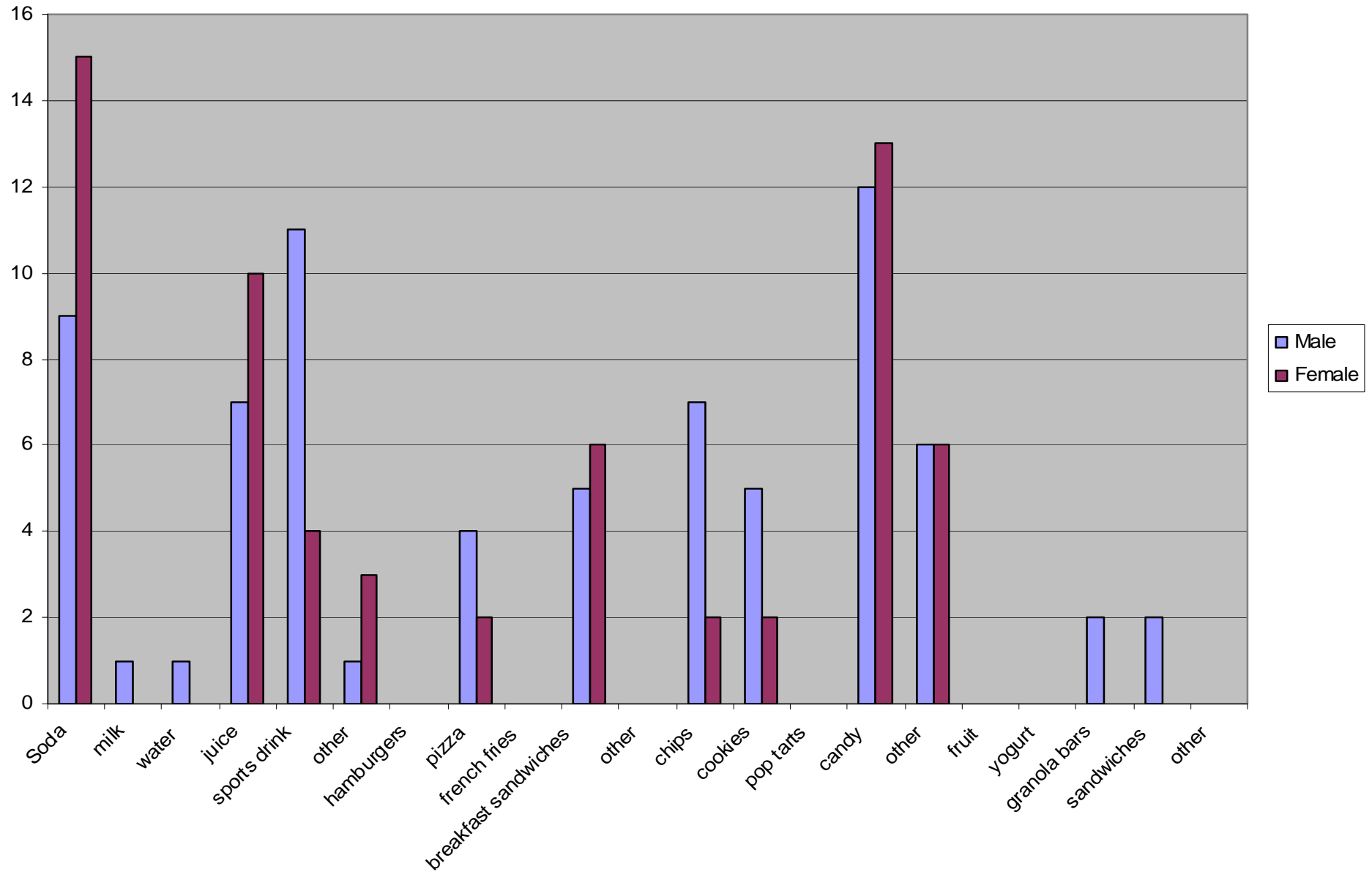
Boston Latin Academy



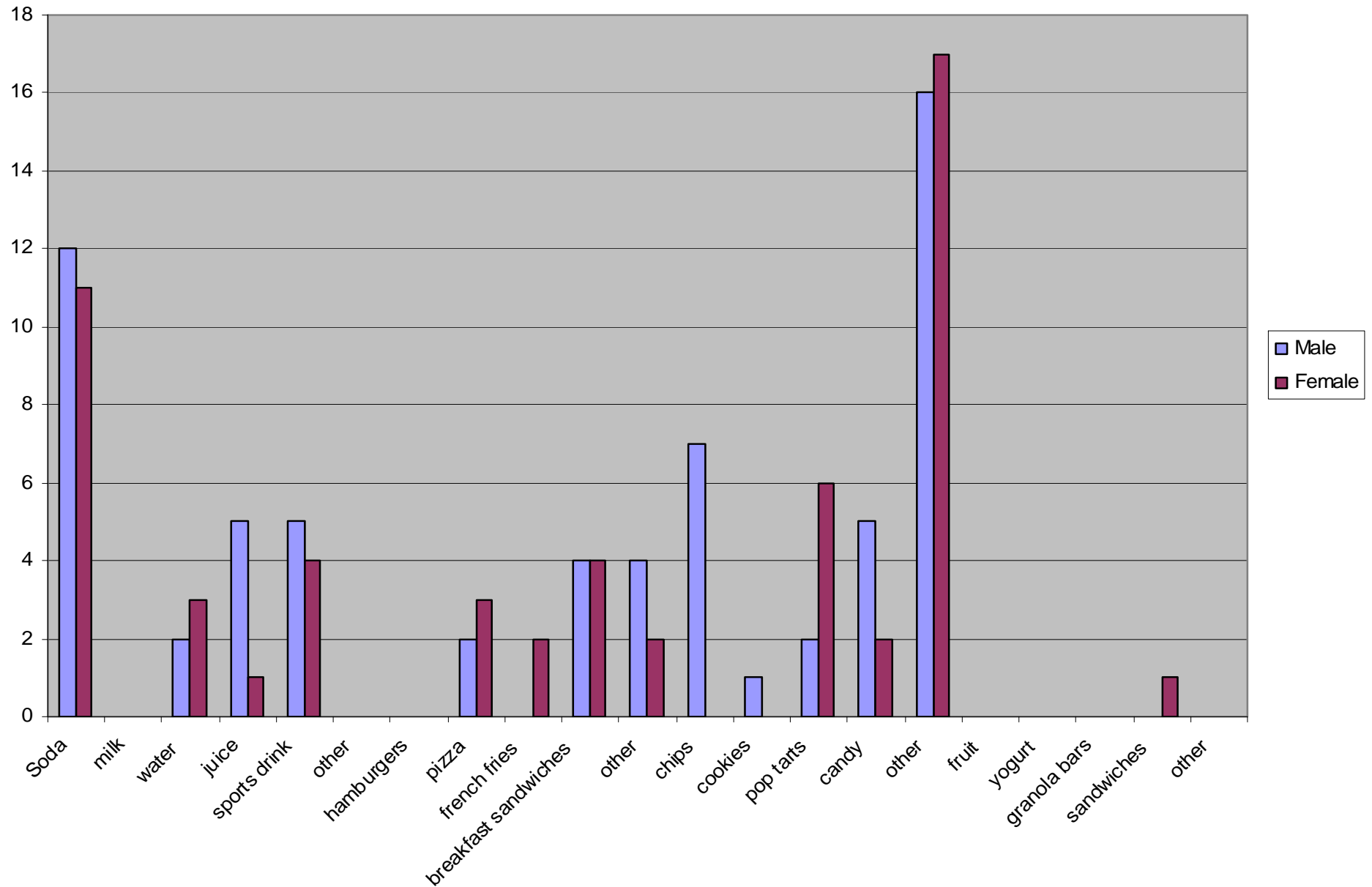
Fenway High School/Boston Arts Academy



Madison Park High School



O'Bryant School



Focus Group



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Purpose

- We wanted to have a first hand understanding of what influences students' eating habits, specifically why they choose to visit canteen trucks
- Participants: Seven Tenth Grade Females from Madison Park High School



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Questions Asked

- What do you drink in a daily basis?
- What things do you consider when making your food choice?
- How much do you spend on food and drink each week?
- What changes would you like your school to make regarding the food choice available?
- How do you know something is healthy and, what do you think is the best way to make these changes?



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Ground Breaking Questions

- How do your eating habits at home compare to your eating habits at school?
- What are your food choices at school and outside?
- What are your thoughts about the school breakfast program?



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Findings

- What the Youth Task Force got from the focus group, is that students eat at the canteen trucks because they believe the food their school offers is below par.



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BPS Breakfast Program



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Purpose and Procedure

- We also compiled a list of data on the Boston Public Schools Breakfast Program.
- This data was done through observations by several YTF members and a few of our reliable friends.
- The questions we were trying to answer were very simple, such as “What is sold”, and “What is the Most Popular Item Sold”.



Program Analysis

- Breakfast Foods that are sold:
 - Bagels, cereal, yogurt, muffins, breakfast pizzas
- Beverages sold
 - Milk (1%, whole, etc), juice, water
- Not much of a variety of food sold at the Breakfast Programs



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Findings

- The information was vital because we now understand why students are eating at the canteen trucks and why some students are eating at the schools.
- This information helped so much because we now see how students view the breakfast program.



School Stores



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School Stores

- We compiled a list of all the high schools in Boston that may or may not have school stores.
- The importance of having this information on schools stores is that it helps us understand why the school has a store and what it is used for.
- Not every school we called had a store but a select few did.
- Those schools sold mostly unhealthy foods such as chips and cookies and the most popular drinks were soda. This data helped us with our overall project because it gave us an inside look on what schools are selling behind closed doors.
- Many of the schools were reluctant to give us information on their schools stores, so sometimes we were unable to get any information at all.



Located Within Schools

- John D. O'Bryant School
- Urban Science Academy
- New Mission High School
- Health Careers Academy
- Media Communications Technology High School
- Boston English High School



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What is Sold

- Most popular snacks: candy, chips, soda and juice
- Least popular snacks: water, granola bars and fruit snacks
- Usually open before and after school and sometimes during lunch.



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Reflections



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Recommendations

- Make food look more appealing
- Advertise healthy food within schools
- Implement nutrition classes early on in school
- Lower the costs of healthier foods
- With this, students will make better food choices



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Lessons Learned

- Some schools are not proud of their policies.
- Nutrition is not a deciding factor for most student's food choices.
- Canteen trucks make large profits.
- Drinks such as water and juice are not advertised as much as they should be.
- Education on this topic has yet to be seriously addressed among students.



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What Could Be Done Differently

- We could have collected more data to analyze.
- We could have been more involved with the schools.
- We could have visited all of the corner stores, canteen trucks and school stores.
- We could have gotten teacher/parent reactions to what the students were eating/how they were spending their money.



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THANK YOU

- We would like to thank CEC members Debra Korzec-Ramirez and Vivien Morris for collaborating with us.
- Our Coordinators: Emily Martin, Emily Cohen.
- PRC Staff: Charles Deutsch, Cindy Hannon and Joanne Soulouque.



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