

Flavored milk no longer a choice in LA schools

June 15 2011, By CHRISTINA HOAG , Associated Press

(AP) -- The Los Angeles Unified School District is taking a stand against child obesity, becoming the nation's largest school system to stop serving sugar-laden flavored milk.

The [school](#) board on Tuesday voted to eliminate chocolate and strawberry milk from schools as of July 1.

LAUSD joins a growing number of school districts nationwide, including in the District of Columbia, Boulder Valley, Colo., and Berkeley, Calif., that serve only plain milk because of the added sugar contained in flavored versions.

The proposal by Superintendent John Deasy came after popular British TV chef Jamie Oliver criticized the district in recent months for serving flavored milks, saying they contain the sugar equivalent of a [candy bar](#).

In one stunt on his ABC show "Food Revolution," he filled a school bus with sand to represent the amount of added sugar LAUSD students consume in a year through flavored milk.

Some board members were rankled by the perception that the district was caving in to Oliver, who unsuccessfully lobbied the district to be allowed to film in local schools.

"I really don't understand why we're letting a TV chef dictate our policy," said board member Tamar Galatzan, who noted that many health

advocates including the [American Heart Association](#) say the nutritional benefits of flavored milk outweigh the harm of added sugar.

Some advocates say that [milk consumption](#) drops when children are not offered the option of chocolate and other flavors.

She noted the district serves [fruit juices](#) containing 27 to 29 grams of sugar per serving, more than the amount of sugar in flavored milk - 20 grams in 8 ounces of fat-free [chocolate milk](#) and 27 grams in fat-free strawberry.

Galatzan was the lone dissenter on the board.

The board's decision was applauded by several proponents in the audience.

"Thirty percent of our kids are obese or are on track to diabetes," said Jennie Cook of Food for Lunch, a coalition advocating nutritious school food. She has been pushing the district to eliminate flavored milk for the past year. "This is a social justice issue."

Emily Ventura, a researcher with the University of Southern California's Childhood Research Center, noted that a number of experts did not recommend flavored milk as a healthy choice. She said 6,000 LAUSD parents had signed a petition to eliminate flavored milk from the district.

Some school districts have opted for a middle road, using natural sweeteners like cane sugar, beet [sugar](#) and Truvia to sweeten milks instead of high-fructose corn syrup based flavorings.

But others say children should learn to drink plain milk.

LAUSD has about 688,000 students, second only to the New York City

Department of Education.

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