

Black students drink more soda when available at school

May 15 2013, by Valerie DeBenedette



The availability of sugar-sweetened or diet soda in schools does not appear to be related to students' overall consumption, except for African-American students, who drink more soda when it's available at school, finds a study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

These findings are from a study of more than 9000 students in grades 8, 10, and 12 done in 2010 and 2011. The students were asked how much soda they drank per day and school administrators were asked about the availability of soda in their schools.

The finding that reducing the availability of soda in school is not linked to reducing overall intake among students has been observed before, said

Yvonne M. Terry-McElrath, M.S.A., survey research associate at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This may be because young people consume only 7 to 15 percent of the calories they take in from sugar-sweetened drinks at school, she noted.

However, finding that African-American students are consuming more soda when it is available at school was surprising, Terry-McElrath added. This may be due to less availability of soda at home or because these students are more likely to buy soda at school if it is available there, she said.

Removing [soft drinks](#) from the [school environment](#) is a good idea, Terry-McElrath said. "Schools [are] either part of the problem or part of the solution and removing all sugar-sweetened beverages supports a healthy learning environment and development of [healthy habits](#)."

"Our analyses looked just at soda and not all sugar-sweetened beverages," Terry-McElrath said. "We know from research that the availability of soda in schools is now quite low. However, other sugary beverages, such as [sports drinks](#) or [fruit drinks](#) with added sugar, are still in schools."

The availability of sodas and other sweet beverages in schools varies widely across the country. For example, soda has not been allowed to be sold during the school day in New York schools since the 1980s, said Deborah Beauvais, RD, district supervisor of school nutrition for the Gates Chili and East Rochester School Districts in New York.

"Restricting the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages in schools has all the best intentions, but one must also take into account what happens outside the school day and the beverages consumed then," Beauvais added. "If children have the means and the availability, they will consume these beverages outside of the school environment."

More information: Terry-McElrath, Y. et al. (2013). School soft drink availability and consumption among U.S. secondary school students. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

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