

A Science Lesson for Those Who Demonize Soda

By ACSH Staff — June 7, 2004

"Which beverage is best for staying slim -- a can of diet orange soda or a glass of orange juice?" asks the *New York Sun's* Julia Levy. "If you ask the city's Department of Education, it's option B, the orange juice," she writes.

The June 27, 2003 article should have made the point to misguided officials that their ban on sodas, even diet ones, and replacement of them with high-sugar juices, is a backwards approach for the obesity crisis. As ACSH President Dr. Elizabeth Whelan told the *Sun*, "There's nothing wrong with soda per se. People just have to know that there are calories in it."

But nearly a year later, as the school year comes to a close, the same regulations apply. And who seriously think the soda ban slimmed New York's kids? Maybe only the regulators themselves, since the rules have not been changed.

So kudos to Bronx High School of Science chemistry teacher, Robert F. Drake, who said in a June 6 letter to the *New York Times*, "It is too bad that State Assembly members addressing the 'life-and-death matter' of soft drinks and candy ("Taking Candy From Pupils? School Vending Bill Says Yes," news article, June 2) do not seem to understand that 'juice' is as bad for students as candy or soft drinks. Excess calories cause obesity, and the 160 or 170 calories in an 11.5-ounce can of Snapple juice exceed the number in a 12-ounce can of Coke (150)."

Mr. Drake, taking an unpopular but scientifically sound stance, writes that "Decaffeinated, artificially sweetened soft drinks might be an answer. Or water. At Bronx Science, students are filling empty water bottles at drinking fountains. New York City water is mighty good, and calorie-free."

Maybe we ought to send our lawmakers back to high school for some remedial science. I would place them in Mr. Drake's class. They'd learn plenty.

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