



## New School Lunch Program: Evan Dawson

Yesterday I had the occasion to cover a new school lunch program, one designed to help parents keep track of what their kids are eating during the day. Gates Chili is using the mealpay.com website to allow parents to check the menus, check their kids' choices, and find out how much money their kids are spending. District leaders hope that this will spark some conversations between parents and their kids; perhaps parents will ask, "Why did you buy two ice cream cones instead of fruit?"

The story reminded me of one important part of my job: to follow up with programs such as this, and to find out if they are actually working. It's easy for us to cover new programs when they're rolled out, but it's incumbent upon us to later discern their viability.

That's not to make any judgment on the Gates Chili lunch program. In fact, if one were to look at the results thus far, it would be easy to conclude that this program is going to work. More kids are using the meal accounts every day, and Gates Chili is selling 500 more meals per day district-wide.

I'm simply pointing out that after that first story, I hope we can remind ourselves to revisit these issues every so often. And I hope that parents and members of the community will give us a nudge after a while -- not just with Gates Chili, but with so many of the stories we do -- to follow up and paint the most accurate picture possible.