Smarter Lunchrooms: A Policy, Systems & Environmental Approach to School Meals
May 2017 | Katie Bark, Project Director
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Smarter Lunchroom Projects

Smarter Lunchroom Pilot Project in 5 Montana High Schools

Team Nutrition and SNAP ED Partnership in Creating Smarter Lunchrooms in Montana Elementary Schools

Development of a Best Practices for Engaging Students in Smarter Lunchrooms Guide

Skyview HS, Billings Refreshing Smoothies

Hardin HS, Orange Mountain
1. Development of food waste protocol
2. Data collection and analysis of food waste and consumption in schools
3. Development of (1) Creating Smarter Lunchroom in High School Video, (2) Conducting a Plate Waste Study using the BEN Center’s Quarter Method Video, (3) Salad Bar Method Video
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Creating Smarter Lunchrooms in Montana High Schools Pilot Project

Methods:
• Developed SLAC (School Lunch Advisory Council) in each school. Foodservice/Teacher/3+ students.
• Developed plan to implement 3+ SL strategies
• Conducted Pre and Post Score Card and photos; Collected 3 Days pre and post plate waste

Outcomes:
Individual Reports and Success Story on each school
Plate Waste Data that showed positive impacts
Utilized information on future trainings and projects

From This

Columbia Falls HS Service Line Makeover

To This

Hardin HS A La Carte Line
High School Salad Bar Actions

1. Turned the salad bar, allowing both sides to be used for easy, fast access.
   - Enhanced salad bar to include soup, homemade bread, and convenient fresh vegetable cups. Offered a soup/salad/bread reimbursable meal option.
   - Created new signage at salad bar and a la carte line.

2. Created a restaurant-style salad bar to offer more fruit and vegetable choices.

3. Repositioned the salad bar to be the first station in the service line.

4. Redesigned the lunchroom by moving the salad bar to the beginning of the lunch line, allowing for easy access and high visibility.
   - Enhanced marketing of salad bar items with eye catching placement of fruit.
   - Using shallower pans on salad bar to decrease waste and leftovers.

5. Moved salad bar to the front of the line.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste Per Consumer</td>
<td>1.20 ounces</td>
<td>1.15 ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ounces Eaten Per Consumer</td>
<td>4.89 ounces</td>
<td>6.30 ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Selected Per Consumer</td>
<td>.63% of total on salad bar</td>
<td>.98% of total on salad bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Selected Per Consumer</td>
<td>.76% of total on salad bar</td>
<td>.95% of total on salad bar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: Data collected from salad bars 3 days pre and 3 days post intervention at 5 high schools, totaling 30 observation days.
# High School Lunch Tray Actions

1. **Branded the lunchroom with new name displayed on banners, aprons, and hats for food service staff.**
   - Advertised daily menu options on a new menu board,

2. **Created a smoothie bar featuring a variety of flavors and a reimbursable meal option.**
   - Catchy and appealing smoothie flavors/names attract student’s attention.
   - Created eye-appealing décor along the serving line.
   - Redesigned the lunchroom room for a more efficient flow pattern. Created a faster service line in a separate corner of the cafeteria and moved the custom sandwich cart to improve access.

3. **Added signage promoting the daily soup, local foods, daily lunch menu, and offer versus serve.**
   - Fruit and vegetable baskets were placed next to the cash register.
   - A Student Nutrition Advisory Council was formed with school staff to guide the strategies to be implemented.
   - Student-designed fruit and vegetable art work was displayed in the lunchroom.
   - Food service staff were retrained on the offer versus serve option, stopped pre-plating trays, and promoted choice within fruits and vegetables.

4. **Started a grab and go lunch meal station for students who don’t want to eat in the lunchroom.**
   - Placing fruits, vegetables, salads and milk front and center on the a la carte line.

5. **Enhanced the main line with decorative baskets and serving dishes.**
   - Offered smoothies, fruit parfaits, and fresh vegetables with attractive promotional signage on the a la carte line.
   - Promoted the daily lunch menu in multiple areas with chalk board and sandwich board signage.
   - Improved ambiance with eye-appealing décor, removed clutter, and ordered colorful banners.
   - Started a sharing bowl for leftover whole fruit.
High School Lunch Tray Results

**Percent Vegetable Waste**
- Pre: 41% per tray
- Post: 30% per tray

**Percent Fruit Waste**
- Pre: 33% per tray
- Post: 36% per tray

**Percent Overall Waste**
- Pre: 21% per tray
- Post: 20% per tray

**Significant Relationship (p < 0.05)**
- Yes
- No

**Note:** Data collected from student lunch trays 3 days pre and 3 days post intervention at 5 high schools, totaling 9,943 individual observations.
MSU, Team Nutrition, & SNAP ED Partnership

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Two webinars & one check in meeting

1. Schools are identified by SNAP-Ed Program and/or Team Nutrition’s School Wellness Coaches.
2. Schools create School Lunch Advisory Committees (SLAC’s) to implement and evaluate change. SLAC’s includes SNAP ED Educator and School Nutrition Manager.
3. Team completes the “spot it” phase, develops a simple action to “plan it” and implements 1-3 strategies to “do it,” and determines simple “prove it” method.
Evaluate

Pre Score Card

Photos

Post Score Card

“Prove It” Strategies
Results

- Building collaboration and positive relationships between school staff and community members.

- SNAP Ed educator had connections with teachers so could carry out the student engagement component like coming up with catchy names for items.

- Opportunity for school nutrition program manager and staff to be in spotlight. Press releases featured positive changes in school lunch program.

- Convinced staff that simple changes work… Butte elementary school saw increase in white milk quickly.

- Expanding to more schools in district and around the state.
Team Nutrition and Food and Health Lab
High School Smarter Lunchroom Partnership

Development of a Best Practices for Engaging Students in Smarter Lunchrooms Guide

• This guide will have 5 nutrition lessons for high or middle school educators to use to engage students in Smarter Lunchrooms initiative.

• It will have a plate waste study lesson plan that can be used as “prove it” method.

• The lessons are being piloted by educators; publication will be out this summer.
Facilitated Factors and Challenges for Student Engagement

- Collaborative foodservice staff and educator
- Popular and effective way for feedback and input on school menus and meal procedures
- Flexibility around student’s schedule and use of incentives
- Conduct projects in the fall rather than spring semester
- Training of front line staff and follow-up to continue collaborations and check long-term sustainability of strategies
Montana’s Smarter Lunchrooms

Resources

- Montana’s Smarter Lunchrooms Success Stories
- Creating Smarter Lunchrooms in Montana High Schools
- Simple Signage Resource Guide
- Plate Waste Protocol and Videos
- Coming soon…

Best Practices for Engaging Students in Smarter Lunchrooms Guide

http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/SmarterLunchrooms.html