

Smarter Lunchroom Strategies Decrease Vegetable Waste in Montana High School Cafeterias

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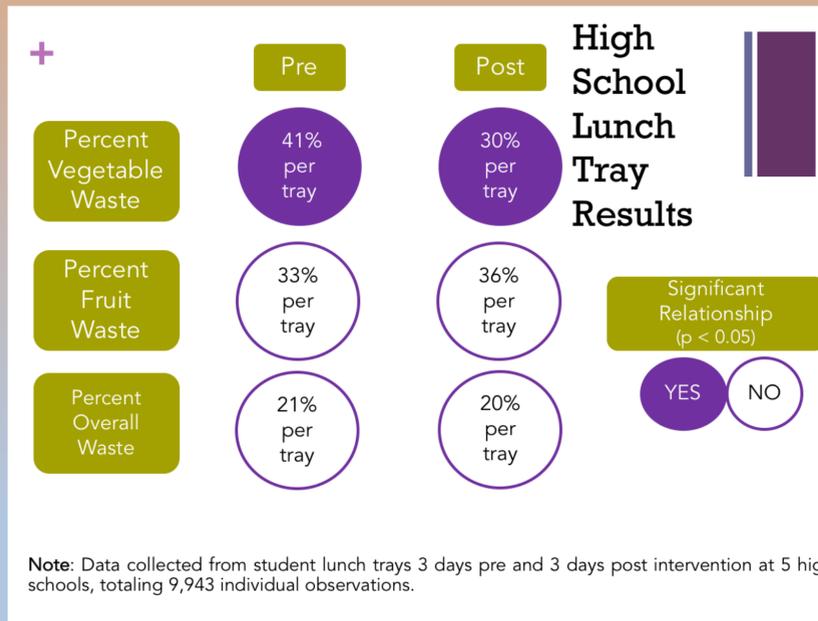
BACKGROUND

- Food service directors at high schools face unique challenges in enticing teens to enjoy a nutritious lunch especially with open campus policies.
- This research examined: Can Smarter Lunchrooms strategies encourage students to select and consume more fruits and vegetables?

METHODS

- Each high school created a School Lunch Advisory Committee (SLAC) comprised of a foodservice director, a teacher, and students. SLACs implemented Smarter Lunchroom strategies targeting the main service line. SLACs selected changes based upon Smarter Lunchrooms scorecard.
- Developed as a pre-test/post-test design in 5 high schools.
- Developed Plate Waste Protocol resources that utilized Quarter Method and measured student selection, consumption, and waste of main line meal components.

RESULTS



Used the Cornell University's Behavioral Economics Center quarter method

- ✓ Vegetable and fried potato waste decreased significantly.
- ✓ Meat/meat alternative waste significantly increased.
- ✓ Milk waste was low; chocolate milk waste significantly decreased.
- ✓ No significant difference in overall total waste.
- ✓ Average Daily Participation (ADP) increased 2% for all 5 sites.

ACTION TAKEN

- Branded the cafeteria or attractively redesigned the line.
- Expanded choices to include a grab and go lunch option, smoothies, fruit parfaits, and fresh vegetables.
- Placed fresh fruit in an attractive bowl near cash register.
- Enhanced service line through attractive signage and eye-appealing presentation.

APPLICATION

- Waste reduction strategies include correct implementation of "Offer versus Serve" and increasing visibility and convenience of selecting vegetables and milk.
- Offering a large number of menu choices may increase overall food waste.
- Developing a SLAC is a simple, no-cost way to gain buy-in among students, and support collaboration for implementing Smarter Lunchroom strategies.

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Funded by a 2014 Cornell
 BEN Center Small Grants
 Program and a USDA Team
 Nutrition Grant.

