Does changing environments really give more nutritional bang for the buck?
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A “Smarter Lunchroom makeover” consists of...

Abstract
New USDA regulations on school lunches that require children to take healthier foods commonly result in reactance and increase tray waste. This study tests whether a Smarter Lunchroom makeover based on the principle of libertarian paternalism can increase selection and consumption of healthy food. After making over two cafeterias for under $50 students took and ate more fruit and vegetables. The Smarter Lunchroom makeover is an easy, inexpensive, and effective way to increase healthy food consumption in school-aged children.

Objective
Requiring children to take certain lunch items can result in increased reactance and waste. This study tests whether a Smarter Lunchroom makeover based on the principle of libertarian paternalism can increase the rate of students’ selections and consumption of common trouble foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Methods
- **2765 observations** (trays) of children grades 7-12
- **Field study** was conducted at Addison and Campbell-Savona Junior-Senior High Schools
- **Before-after study design** was used to test the effects of a Smarter Lunchroom makeover
- Pre- and post-makeover data regarding **popularity of fruits & vegetables** and subsequent **tray waste** were collected

Results
Following the Smarter Lunchroom makeover:
- Students were 13.4% more **likely to take** fruit (P = .012)
- Students were 23% more **likely to take** vegetables (P < .001)
- **Consumption** of fruit increased by 18% (P = .004)
- **Consumption** of vegetables increased by 25% (P < .001)

Conclusions
After spending only 3 hours and less than $50 on a Smarter Lunchroom makeover, children both took and ate significantly more fruits and vegetables at lunch. An inexpensive, easily scalable, and simple intervention such as the Smarter Lunchroom makeover is a realistic tool with which to combat childhood obesity and to promote lifelong healthy habits in the over 31 million children participating in the National School Lunch Program.

References: