

Smarter Lunchroom Strategies Increases Vegetable Selection at Salad Bars

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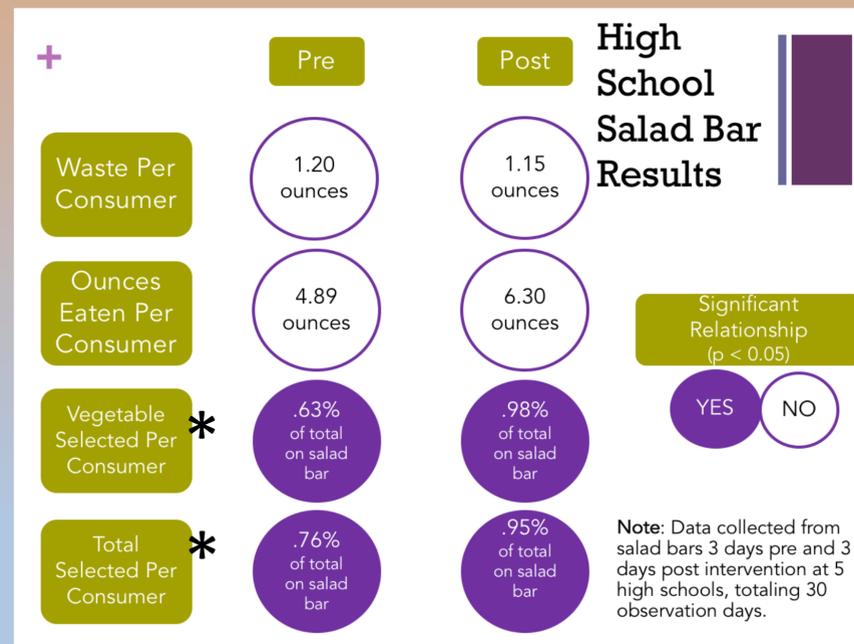
BACKGROUND

- High school students selection of fruit and vegetables is often low and waste is high.
- Salad bars provide an opportunity for students to self-select fruit and vegetable choices and serving size.
- This study measured if Smarter Lunchrooms strategies targeting salad bars can nudge high school students to choose and consume more fruits and vegetables.

METHODS

- Each high school developed a School Lunch Advisory Committee (SLAC) comprised of a foodservice director, a teacher, and several students. Based on the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard, SLACs selected and implemented Smarter Lunchroom strategies targeting the salad bar.
- Examined the effectiveness of the Smarter Lunchroom strategies on salad bar selection and waste using a pre-test post-test design in 5 Montana high schools. Analyzed results using paired sample t-tests.
- Measured student selection of fruits and vegetables and waste of salad bar items using direct weighing.

RESULTS



*Based on total salad bar weight

- ✓ Students selected significantly more vegetables and more items overall from the salad bar.
- ✓ Less waste and increased consumption, but not significantly.
- ✓ Percent of fruit selected from salad bar increased slightly, but not significantly.

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Moved the salad bar to the front of the service line and made the salad bar accessible on both sides.
- Improved salad bar choices to include soup, homemade bread, and convenient fresh fruit/vegetable cups.
- Enhanced attraction through improved signage, marketing, and eye-appealing presentation.

APPLICATION

- Implementing changes that increase visibility, variety, attractiveness, and convenience of salad bars boost vegetable consumption per student.
- Developing a SLAC team is a simple, no-cost way to gain buy-in among students, teachers, and foodservice staff when implementing Smarter Lunchroom strategies.
- Student engagement sparks positive change in school meal programs.



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