The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement
Increased Salad Bar Usage in Middle Schools

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Background

Students consume up to 50% of daily calories at school. To encourage healthy choices in school cafeterias, the Arizona Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) implemented the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement (SLM) in middle schools.

Objective

To determine which SLM middle school was the most effective at increasing students’ trips to the salad bar.

Methods

Recruitment & Intervention

Four middle schools with salad bars were recruited.

SLM Activities Over 7-Week Intervention Period

- School 1: Control
- School 2: Student-led Intervention
- School 3: Staff-led Intervention
- School 4: Student/Staff-led Intervention

Assessments Used to Measure Impact of the SLM

- SNAP-Ed staff used an observation tool once per week for seven weeks (Box 1)

The SLM Observation Tool

- Counted number of whole fruits offered on the salad bar before/after lunch time.
- Tallied number of students visiting the salad bar who took and did not take an item.

Box 1: Factors Tracked on the SLM Observation Tool

Box 2: Five of the Eight SLM Scorecard Strategies Assessed

- Intervention schools were assessed pre/post using five of the eight sections of the SLM scorecard (Box 2)

The Results

The SLM Scorecard Results with Percent Change from Intervention Schools

- The maximum score for the five SLM Scorecard strategies was 34.

The staff-led group started with a higher score; however, the student/staff combination showed greater improvements (Table 1).

Figure 1: Total Salad Bar Visits from All Schools over a Seven Week Period

- 148% (n=622) visited the salad bar in school 4.
- 41% (n=201) visited the salad bar in school 3.
- 43% (n=342) visited the salad bar in school 2.
- 26% (n=91) visited the salad bar in school 1.

The middle school with student/staff combination made the most improvements to the cafeteria environment and had the highest number of visits to the salad bar. Future studies should explore the efficacy and feasibility of engaging students and/or staff in the full, eight-strategy Smarter Lunchrooms Movement.

Conclusion

References