Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program

Overview

The Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program is a direct education and PSE change intervention designed to promote healthy eating in children by increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables in school lunches and providing nutrition education to increase knowledge of and improve attitudes toward eating a variety of locally grown produce. The RUSD approach is revenue neutral for the district’s nutrition services and income-generating for local, small farmers. Its primary component is the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar, a daily salad bar stocked with produce provided by local farmers. The percentage of salad bar offerings that are locally grown ranges from 50-100%, depending on the time of year. The program offers cooking carts, chef and farmer visits to the classroom, Harvest of the Month teacher training and activities, school gardens, and field trips to farms and farmers markets. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

The RUSD Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program targets primary school (K-6) children in elementary schools. The program was evaluated with 29 elementary schools in the district with a student population of 24,077. The school district’s student population is 53% Latino, and 60% of all students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. **Setting:** School **Target Audience:** Elementary School **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components
The RUSD Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program includes the following main components:

1. **Create support for the program** from the school board, the school administration, teachers, parents, PTAs, PTOs, nutrition services staff, and other stakeholders through meetings, salad bar demonstrations, and taste tests.

2. **Identify and recruit local farmers** to provide fresh produce for the salad bar. Farmers can be identified by your local farmers’ market manager.

3. **Train school food service staff members** to set up, prepare foods, order foods, document usage, monitor, and take down the salad bar.

4. **Conduct promotional activities** (for example, a grand opening, family night, taste tests, “Eat Lunch with Your Child Day,” and newsletters). These activities stimulate interest in the program from students, teachers, and parents.

5. **Provide daily salad bar** to all students as a school lunch meal alternative.

6. **Monitor the salad bar** for compliance with the National School Lunch Program requirements for fruits, vegetables, and protein.

7. **Educate students** about nutrition and the growing of local food (for example, food safety lessons, the Harvest of the Month program, farmer visits, taste tests, cooking carts, farm field trips, and school gardens).

8. **Work to ensure a revenue-neutral program** through inventory control, ordering control, and cost control. For example, incorporating the use of some commodities received from the federal government drastically reduces the cost of certain items (e.g., proteins) that can offset the higher cost of fruits and vegetables purchased from farmers. Additionally, waste management decreases with the implementation of the salad bars, resulting in a lower food cost per student and contributes to offsetting the additional labor cost required to oversee the salad bar.

**Intervention Materials**

This intervention has been carefully developed and implemented in elementary schools in Riverside, California. In order for it to be as effective for you as it has been for others, it is important that you follow implementation guidelines carefully and limit adaptation to just those things that can be adapted without sacrificing the quality of the intervention.

- **Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program Guide**— Riverside Unified School District’s (RUSD) Nutrition Services created this guide to assist school food service directors in implementing their own salad bar program. It is a detailed “How-to” guide that includes a step-by-step tutorial on how to start a program, example menus, ordering forms, maintenance protocols, and more.

- **Harvest of the Month**— Harvest of the Month provides promotional materials and lesson plans that include hands-on activities focused on a specific fruit or vegetable that is in season and highlighted during a particular month of the school-year. The monthly rotation of fruits and vegetables is specific to California’s growing season. To see the materials described above, click on Monthly Elements at harvestofthemonth.com.

- **Teacher Training**— RUSD uses materials developed by California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom to train teachers how to incorporate agriculture-themed lessons into their classes. Training materials can be found at: cfaite.org/index.php. Click on What’s Growin’ On in the Resources section to download the Teacher’s Supplement.

- **Monthly Education Newsletter**— In collaboration with Riverside Department of Public Health, RUSD’s Nutrition Services provide schools with a monthly education newsletter that includes hand-on activities.
such as gardening and physical activities. To see examples of Educator newsletters, visit: http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/extension-resources.aspx

- **Monthly Family Newsletter** — RUSD’s Nutrition Services sends a monthly newsletter home with every child that includes recipes, healthy eating tips, and tips for selecting, storing and serving featured produce. To see examples of Family newsletters, visit: http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/translated-newsletters.aspx

- **Monthly Calendar Contest** — Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students participate in a drawing/coloring contest featuring the fruit or vegetable of the month. Winners are included in a 12-month calendar and the grand prize winner is featured on the cover.

**Intervention Costs**

Materials available at no cost.

**Evidence Summary**

The program has been evaluated in two separate studies. The Center for Food and Justice, in collaboration with RUSD’s Nutrition Services, conducted an evaluation in 2005. Using data collected from one school, this evaluation tracked the number of students (pre- and post-salad bar implementation) who chose a hot meal versus the salad bar and the number of students and teachers who bought lunch. The evaluation also tracked the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed by those who chose a hot meal versus those who chose the salad bar (data collected only at post-salad bar implementation). During that same year (2005), this evaluation collected data from two additional schools that assessed the program’s effects on knowledge, awareness, and preference for specific fruits and vegetables. In 2008-2009, the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill conducted an evaluation of the salad bar component of the program. Data were collected from four schools that received the salad bar during the 2008-2009 school year and were compared to data collected from two comparison schools that were to receive the salad bar during the following school year. Data were collected directly from students on the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed at lunch at the beginning and end of the school year. This evaluation also looked at school food service revenue and costs both before and after the program’s implementation. In the 2005 evaluation, students eating at the salad bar ate an average of 2.36 servings of fruits and vegetables for lunch compared to 1.49 servings for those students who ate from the hot bar. This evaluation also found modest increases in students’ knowledge, awareness, and preferences for a variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables. The 2008-2009 evaluation found no increase in fruit and vegetable consumption overall among students in schools that received the salad bar during that school year compared to students in comparison schools. However, the evaluation results showed that children who chose the salad bar significantly increased consumption of fruits and vegetables at lunch by half a serving. The 2008-2009 evaluation also found that food costs were no greater in the salad bar schools compared to the comparison schools. The evaluation found a slight increase in labor hours per meal for schools implementing the salad bar. Both evaluations found that the program generates revenue for small farmers.

**Classification:** Practice-tested

**Evaluation Indicators**

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate
intervention progress and success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
<th>Population Results (R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>MT1</td>
<td>LT1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Settings</td>
<td>ST5, ST6, ST7</td>
<td>MT5</td>
<td>LT5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
<td>MT8</td>
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**Evaluation Materials**

Center TRT developed an evaluation logic model and evaluation plan for a Farmers’ Market Salad Bar such as the one the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) implemented. The logic model is intended to guide the evaluation process (as opposed to the planning process). This evaluation plan focuses on determining reach, adoption, and the extent of program implementation, as well as the effectiveness of the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program in addressing targeted outcomes, such as changing the school food environment and student attitudes towards eating fruits and vegetables, both precursors to behavior change. The evaluation is a pre- and post-test design with no control group. The evaluation plan provides guidance on evaluation questions and types and sources of data for both process and outcome evaluation. If you are interested in answering evaluation questions not listed in the evaluation plan, please refer to the list of additional evaluation questions here.

- Logic model
- Evaluation plan

The Riverside United School District Nutrition Services Department and the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College evaluators created several materials for its evaluation that are also available for your use. Some of these tools have been incorporated into the evaluation plan that Center TRT developed. Please provide credit to the Riverside United School District Nutrition Services Department and the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College when reproducing materials in the original, or adapted, form:

- Evaluation tool descriptions
- Farmer Interview Guide
- Educator Interview Guide
- Food Service Director Interview Guide
- Food Service Staff Interview Guide
- FruitVeggie Neophobia
- School Lunch Recall

**Additional Information**

**Website:** Additional information on the RUSD Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program can be found on Center TRT’s website: [http://www.centertrt.org/?p=intervention&id=1101&section=1](http://www.centertrt.org/?p=intervention&id=1101&section=1). Additionally, the RUSD
Nutrition Services website is http://www.riversideunified.org/departments/nutritionservices. Contact Person: Adleit Asi Phone: 951-352-6740 Email: aasi@riversideunified.org Riverside Unified School District 3380 14th Street Riverside, CA 92501 Phone: (951) 788-7135 http://www.riversideunified.org/home