Smarter Lunchrooms Movement (SML)

Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Program (B.E.N. Center)

Overview

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement is a research-tested intervention designed to improve child eating behavior by providing evidence-based tools and strategies to school lunchrooms. The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement translates research from the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (B.E.N. Center) to schools across the country. Smarter Lunchrooms ‘nudge’ students to select and consume healthy foods. Smarter Lunchroom strategies are low-cost/no-cost solutions that preserve choice, decrease waste, increase participation, and maintain or increase revenue. The program has a guide of best practices for implementing behavioral economic principles in school lunchrooms to increase the number of students who select fruit, the target entrée, vegetables, reimbursable meals, and milk. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating  
**Intervention Type:** Direct Education, Social Marketing, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

SML targets children at K-12 schools. **Setting:** School  
**Target Audience:** Elementary School, Middle School, High School  
**Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement uses behavioral economics principles to create strategies that shift choices in school lunchrooms. Training materials and best practices guides provide information on these strategies. These intervention components help change the school lunchroom environment to make healthy choices “convenient, attractive, and normal,” and therefore, “nudge” children to improve their dietary intake.
**Intervention Materials**

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement’s premiere tool is the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard which contains a list of strategies schools can use to increase consumption of healthy foods while decreasing waste. Examples of Smarter Lunchrooms strategies recommended by the USDA include:

1. Offer fruit in at least two locations on the serving line, one of which is right before the point of sale.
2. Conduct vegetable taste tests.
3. Ensure while milk is organized and represents at least 1/3 of all available milk.
4. Label pre-packaged salads or salad bar choices with creative, descriptive names and display next to each choice.
5. Label fruits and vegetables with creative, descriptive names such as x-ray vision carrots or protein packed chickpeas.
6. Bundle a reimbursable meal into a grab-and-go option and label it with a creative name like the Hungry Kid Meal. [https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/scorecard](https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/scorecard)


**Intervention Costs**

Cost information coming soon.

**Evidence Summary**

A list of articles published from the SLM program is listed on the SLM website. Additional articles with evidence from school lunchroom studies were available on the Key Discoveries page on the Food and Brand Lab website. Each piece of evidence has its own feature on the key Discoveries page with a link to the research article and options to contact the author:


- When a main dish was prepared by a professional chef, children were more likely to select it as a main
- Dish and vegetable consumption increased. [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019566631400436X]

- Removing chocolate milk from lunchrooms can have negative impact on lunch purchasing and overall milk consumption. [http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0091022]

- Adding healthy foods to concession stands does not negatively impact sales and improves parent satisfaction. [http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0072008]

- The quarter-waste method is most appropriate for evaluating tray waste in cafeterias. [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212267213013373]

- Nutrition report cards are feasible, inexpensive, and could nudge children towards healthier choices. [http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0072008]

- Sliced fruit is more appealing to children than whole fruit. [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(13)00105-0/abstract]

- A convenience line with healthy foods “nudged” students away from unhealthy foods. [http://jpubhealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/01/31/pubmed.fds003.full]

Evaluation types vary by study. **Classification:** Research-tested

### Evaluation Indicators

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

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<tr>
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<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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>ST1</td>
<td>MT1</td>
<td>LT1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Settings</td>
<td>ST5, ST6, ST7</td>
<td>MT5</td>
<td>LT5, LT7, LT8, LT10</td>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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### Evaluation Materials

Experts from the B.E.N. Center can help schools design an evaluation plan that includes the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard, photos, surveys, production records, sales records, and plate waste.

### Additional Information
Website: The SLM website http://smarterlunchrooms.org includes a description, history and mission of the SLM, as well as links to best practices, training materials, and research publications. Featured stories from the program are also available. Contact Person: Heidi Kessler Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs Email: HK887@cornell.edu Phone: (607) 255-7822