



Smarter Lunchrooms ACTION GUIDE



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SMARTER LUNCHROOMS ACTION GUIDE

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Project Director
Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D.
Nutrition Education Coordinator

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The **Smarter Lunchrooms Action Guide** provides guidance for school nutrition programs on strategies to change the cafeteria environment and help students make healthy food choices. This guide is based on the Smarter Lunchrooms principles developed by the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (B.E.N. Center), and reflects the experiences of six schools that participated in the Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover Pilot (SLMP) through Connecticut's 2013 Team Nutrition grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The **Smarter Lunchrooms Action Guide** is available on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Smarter Lunchrooms Web page at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=336028. For additional information, contact:

Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator
2013 Team Nutrition Grant Project Director
Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
860-807-2075
susan.fiore@ct.gov

For questions regarding the operation of Connecticut's school nutrition program, contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education.



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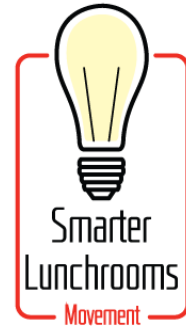
- **Food service directors** and their **school staff** from the six SLMP schools:
 - Nick Aldi, Food Service Director, Manchester Public Schools
 - Ernie J. Koschmieder, Food Service Director, Groton Public Schools
 - Liz Paternostro, Food Services Manager, East Hampton Public Schools
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1 — Introduction

The **Smarter Lunchrooms Action Guide** provides guidance for school nutrition programs on strategies to change the cafeteria environment and help students make healthy food choices. This guide is based on the Smarter Lunchrooms principles developed by the Cornell B.E.N. Center, and reflects the experiences of six schools that participated in the Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover Pilot (SLMP) through Connecticut’s 2013 Team Nutrition grant from the USDA. For more information on the SLMP, see section 5.

SMARTER LUNCHROOMS OVERVIEW

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement was established as part of the B.E.N. Center in 2010, through a grant from the USDA. Smarter Lunchrooms uses **behavioral economics**, the science of how environmental cues influence decision-making, to promote healthy choices in school lunchrooms. Strategies focus on making small environmental changes – such as ambience, prompting and the packaging, order and placement of food items on the cafeteria line – to influence students’ daily food choices.



Smarter Lunchrooms strategies are evidence-based, simple, no cost or low-cost changes to the school lunchroom environment that:

- promote healthy eating behaviors and nudge children toward nutritious foods; and
- improve school meal participation and profits while decreasing waste.

Smarter Lunchrooms helps schools evaluate the lunchroom, determine what they are doing well, and identify opportunities for improvement.



WHY SMARTER LUNCHROOMS?

The goal of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) is to provide children with nutritious meals that combat the dual problems of childhood hunger and obesity. Hunger and food insecurity affect millions of our nation's children. More than one in three children are overweight or obese.

The USDA school meal patterns required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 address these problems by meeting children's nutrition needs. However, meals are only nutritious when students eat them. Smarter Lunchrooms helps schools meet the NSLP and SBP goal by promoting healthy choices for students, and encouraging selection of reimbursable meals.



CAFETERIA ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCES STUDENT CHOICES

Like all businesses, school nutrition programs need to promote a specific image to bring in and keep their customers. Smarter Lunchrooms addresses key strategies to help schools create a positive cafeteria environment that encourages student participation.

School food service staff plays a critical role in influencing what students choose to eat each day. How staff serves the food and interacts with students determines whether students buy school meals, and what meal components they decide to take. It can also determine whether students buy a la carte items instead of school meals, or bring foods from home.

The cafeteria environment is shaped by many decisions such as what and how many food choices to offer, and where and how to present foods on the serving line. Smarter Lunchrooms strategies help food service staff structure the cafeteria environment so it encourages students to:

- increase selections of reimbursable school meals;
- increase selections of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables; and
- select healthier a la carte options such as yogurt parfaits and vegetables with hummus.

Positive attitudes are key to success. Positive staff attitudes, communication (including nonverbal communication like body language), and messaging are critical to creating a pleasant cafeteria environment that promotes healthy eating. Staff interactions should welcome and encourage students to enjoy delicious healthy meals in a pleasant atmosphere.

Keep the goal of school meals in mind! Have a **positive attitude** about making changes to help students eat healthy.

2 — Steps for Change

Implementing any change can seem overwhelming, especially with limited staffing and resources. Smarter Lunchrooms helps schools make simple changes that can have big impact. Most Smarter Lunchrooms strategies can be done without any cost or much effort, such as rearranging foods on the serving line, developing creative names for menu items, and using suggestive selling. The steps in this section help school nutrition programs be successful with developing, implementing and evaluating local Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.



GETTING STARTED

Assess the lunchroom's current practices and consider what changes can be made to improve the cafeteria environment. Focus on offering **choices**, and making healthy foods more **visible** and **convenient** for students to choose.

Start small. Review the principles for improving eating behaviors in section 3, and the Smarter Lunchrooms strategies for success in section 4. Identify one or two things that can be done right now, for example, adding a fruit bowl to each cashier's station, moving white milk in front of flavored milk, or developing creative vegetable names for elementary school menus. Add more strategies to build on success.

Enlist school staff members and students to help with different strategies, as appropriate. For example:

- student groups could conduct a survey about the school nutrition program;
- art teachers could help students create colorful artwork and posters for the cafeteria walls;
- classroom teachers could conduct taste-tests of new menu items as part of classroom nutrition education activities; and
- the school's parent organization could help with promoting the cafeteria's healthy changes to families.

Connect Smarter Lunchrooms to existing school programs and collaborations such as the HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms ([HUSCC:SL](#)), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Farm to School, [Fuel Up To Play 60](#), and [Chefs Move to Schools](#).

Collaborate with professional health organizations, wellness groups, community organizations, local businesses and others to obtain needed resources and support. For more information, see "[Step 4 – Identify Resources](#)" in this section.



STEP 1 — IDENTIFY A SMARTER LUNCHROOMS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Schools will be more successful with implementing and sustaining Smarter Lunchrooms if they develop a collaborative approach that includes partnerships between food service and school staff. A local school leadership team helps to:

- evaluate cafeteria operations and identify priority areas for change;
- develop an action plan;
- identify resources;
- implement changes;
- promote awareness and buy-in from students, families and school staff;
- monitor implementation; and
- evaluate progress.

At a minimum, the team should consist of the food service director, cafeteria manager and school principal. The team can also include other members as appropriate to local needs, such as students, teachers, parents, school nurse, other school staff, and members of local community groups.

Think about **collaborations** that can enhance and support local Smarter Lunchrooms efforts, such as:

- student leadership groups and clubs, e.g., student government, National Honor Society and student service organizations;
- parent groups, such as parent teacher association (PTA) or parent teacher organization (PTO);
- the district's school wellness policy team;
- local community groups and programs; and
- nutrition and wellness organizations, such as [New England Dairy & Food Council](#) and [Cooking Matters](#).



STEP 2 — ASSESS THE CAFETERIA

Identifying what needs to be changed is an important step in planning strategies to improve the cafeteria environment. Start with a **cafeteria walk-through** to see things from students' perspective. When the serving lines are completely set up for lunch, enter the cafeteria where students come in. Go through the serving line from the beginning, to the cashier's station, and then to the tables where students sit down to eat. Some things to consider include:

- What is the first thing you see – what draws your attention?
- Which foods are most convenient and least convenient?
- Is the serving line set-up customer friendly?

Seeing the cafeteria through students' eyes helps identify areas for improvement.

Use the B.E.N. Center's [Lunchroom Self-Assessment Score Card](#) to evaluate what the food service program is doing well, and identify opportunities for improvement. Other helpful B.E.N. Center evaluation tools include the [DPIE \(Diagnose, Prescribe, Implement, Evaluate\) General Observation Checklist](#) and [Evaluation Matrix](#).

Take photographs as part of the cafeteria assessment. When people regularly work in the same environment, it is sometimes difficult to see what needs to change. Photographs show things about the lunchroom that food service staff may not otherwise notice. Take the photographs from students' eye level, when food is on the serving line ready for service. Use the B.E.N. Center's Photo Checklist for guidance (see page 6).

Use Existing Data

Use existing cafeteria data to determine potential areas for improvement, and identify appropriate Smarter Lunchrooms strategies. The school food service program already collects and tracks data that describes the cafeteria operations, such as meal participation rates, production records and food cost. For more information, see "[Step 8 – Evaluate and Maintain](#)" in this section.

Collaborate with Other Schools

Consider collaborations with other schools and districts to assess the cafeteria and share strategies for success. It is often helpful to have someone from a different school or district do a cafeteria walk-through in your school. They will see the program operations with fresh eyes. Visit other schools that are successfully implementing Smarter Lunchrooms. Seeing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies in action helps to identify real-life actions that can be applied in your own school.

B.E.N. Center Photo Checklist *

Take photographs before and after implementing the Smarter Lunchrooms makeover, customizing this list to suit your lunchroom space. Try to frame the same shots each time to get the clearest before/after comparison. Take photographs when food is on the line, and from students' eye level. For legal reasons, collect signed consent forms or avoid photographing students. Ask before photographing adults.



Exterior/Approach to Lunchroom and Common Spaces

- Exterior/approach to lunchroom and common spaces”
- Doorways
- Wall space and bulletin boards
- Lighting
- Stations or tables in common space, e.g., lost and found or student groups
- Show traffic flow patterns (entering, lining up and exiting)
- Anywhere cleaning items are stored, such as mops, buckets and cloths
- Garbage, recycling and composting

Serving Lines

Complete for each line

- Overall view of area – “first glance”
- Counters
- Walls, especially where students line up
- Any decorations or signs, including posted menus and promotions
- Hot foods serving area
- Cold foods serving area
- Snacks/chips/cookies area
- Cooler, open and shut
- Freezer, open and shut
- Milk serving area
- Condiments
- Any other food or beverage serving area
- Registers, alone and with surrounding counter and walls
- Tray storage
- Cutlery storage

Snack Window

- Overall view of area – “first glance”
- Walls and counter spaces, especially where students line up to wait
- Any decorations or signs, including posted menus and promotional materials
- Any food or beverage visible to students
- Any used or unused wall space (outside or inside window) visible to students
- Register and surrounding view
- Condiments
- Tray storage
- Cutlery storage

Dining Area

Can be done before or after a lunch period, to avoid photographing students

- Overall view of area – “first glance”
- Tabletops
- Seats
- Wall spaces, used or unused
- Signs
- Garbage areas
- Cutlery storage

Optional Staff Areas

- Wall space, used or unused
- Work stations

* Smarter Lunchrooms Movement and the B.E.N. Center.

STEP 3 — PRIORITIZE NEEDS AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The Smarter Lunchrooms strategies are intervention principles that school nutrition programs can customize and adapt for a variety of cafeteria environments. Use the cafeteria’s goals to determine the strategies that food service staff will implement. Examples of goals might include:

- increasing participation in reimbursable meals;
- increasing students’ consumption of vegetables;
- increasing students’ consumption of white milk;
- increasing students’ consumption of targeted entrees;
- decreasing plate waste; and
- reducing food cost.

Each school cafeteria has its own unique opportunities and challenges. The Smarter Lunchrooms strategies can be customized to meet the individual needs of different cafeteria serving and dining areas. Think about the **intent** of the strategy, and develop an alternate approach that meets this intent. The example below shows how to customize a Smarter Lunchrooms strategy.

Strategy: *Focus on Fruit – Make fruit available at two or more locations on the serving line, including the POS.*

Intent: To offer additional opportunities for students to self-select a fruit, which helps meet reimbursable meal criteria and increases the likelihood of fruit consumption.

Challenge: The cafeteria does not have additional space on the serving line or at the POS.

Solution: Use a moveable cart with attractive fruit displays next to the POS or just inside the serving line right before the steam table. Students will see the fruit first, and be more likely to select it.



Prioritize the areas for change identified in the cafeteria’s assessment, and address them in order of local importance by developing a Smarter Lunchrooms action plan. An action plan includes specific strategies and steps, identifies needed resources, indicates who is responsible, and identifies a target completion date for each task. A Smarter Lunchrooms action planning form is available on the CSDE’s [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) Web page.

STEP 4 — IDENTIFY RESOURCES

Identify the resources needed to implement the cafeteria’s chosen Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, and where to find them. Some resources and materials to consider include Smarter Lunchrooms education and training materials, nutrition education materials, menu boards, signage, posters, and serving line display equipment such as attractive linens, colorful bowls and trays, tiered metal baskets and clear plastic frames for signs.

Smarter Lunchrooms Materials

The B.E.N. Center’s [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) Web site provides many resources to assist schools with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, including handouts, videos and research summaries. Information on Smarter Lunchrooms research is available on [Cornell’s Food and Brand Lab](#) Web site. Other key B.E.N. Center Smarter Lunchrooms resources include:

- Cornell B.E.N. Center: <http://ben.dyson.cornell.edu/>
- Cornell Food and Brand Lab YouTube Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/FoodandBrandLab>
- Smarter Lunchrooms Video Tips: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/more-videos>
- Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Technical Assistance Providers’ Handbook: Available upon request from the B.E.N. Center at ben@cornell.edu.
- Smarter Lunchrooms Movement No Time to Train: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/training-materials>

For more resources, see the CSDE’s [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) Web page, and the CSDE’s Healthy School Environment and Nutrition Education resource lists on the CSDE’s [Resources for School Nutrition Programs](#) Web page.

Signage and Posters

Menu boards and signage materials are available from a variety of commercial suppliers. Many nutrition education posters are available at low cost. For a list of companies and organizations that provide signs and posters, see the “Signage and Posters” section of the CSDE’s [Menu Planning and Food Production](#) resource list.



Display Equipment and Supplies

Check with the school’s local equipment distributor for food display equipment and supplies such as attractive linens, colorful bowls and trays, tiered metal baskets and clear plastic frames. Other sources include local craft stores, department stores, discount stores and thrift stores.

Funding

Look for potential local funding sources such as the school’s PTA/PTO, district organizations and local businesses. Consider local, state and federal grant opportunities such as Fuel Up to Play 60 and the New England Dairy & Food Council’s breakfast grants. For more information, see the “Grants and Funding” section of the CSDE’s [Wellness Policies for Schools and Child Care](#) resource list.

STEP 5 — EDUCATE AND TRAIN SCHOOL STAFF

Based on the experience of the SLMP schools, buy-in and support from the following people are critical to successful implementation of a Smarter Lunchrooms makeover:

- food service director;
- cafeteria manager;
- food service staff (including all servers, cashiers and general workers who will be implementing the school’s Smarter Lunchrooms strategies); and
- building administrators, e.g., principal and assistant principal.

Smarter Lunchrooms cannot be successful unless the food service staff supports and consistently implements the planned strategies. It is important that staff understands **why** the changes are being made; **how** they benefit both students and food service staff; and **how** to implement them.

Cafeteria staff buy-in is critical to successful implementation. Include site staff in the planning process, and provide opportunities for their input.

The food service director and cafeteria manager set the tone for success. Positive leaders promote excitement and encourage their food service staff to be supportive. Encourage buy-in by providing ongoing education and guidance about Smarter Lunchrooms, and seeking staff input about implementation strategies.

Staff training is critical for success. All food service staff should receive training prior to starting the Smarter Lunchrooms makeover. As time goes on, staff may need additional training to provide reinforcement of the Smarter Lunchrooms strategies. For information on training materials, see “[Step 4 – Identify Resources](#)” on page 8.

Administrative support is a key determinant of how well the cafeteria implements their Smarter Lunchrooms strategies. Promote buy-in by educating school leaders about Smarter Lunchrooms, engaging them in the planning process, and sharing the cafeteria’s successes. The SLMP schools with strong support from the building principal and other administrative staff were most successful at making and sustaining healthy changes in the cafeteria.



Stocking fruits and vegetables at East Hampton Middle School

STEP 6 — IMPLEMENT SMARTER LUNCHROOMS STRATEGIES

Use the cafeteria’s Smarter Lunchrooms action plan to implement the planned changes (see “[Step 3 – Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan](#)”). Schools can begin implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies at any time during the school year. Start with easy changes – such as adding signage and posters to the serving line, moving the milk, and putting a fruit basket at the cashier’s stations – and build on their success.

If the school food service program conducts an extensive cafeteria makeover, the best times to start are at the beginning of the school year or after a school break. This allows adequate time for the food service program to:

- plan and conduct the makeover, such as purchasing supplies, creating signage, arranging decorative displays, and rearranging equipment and serving lines;
- provide staff education and training; and
- promote the healthy changes to students, families and school staff.

Keep it fresh! Students get bored with repetition. Keep students’ interest by changing the cafeteria and menus throughout the school year. Examples include daily updates of menu boards, seasonal rotation of decorations, posters and signage, and conducting special monthly cafeteria promotions and events.

STEP 7 — BUILD AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

Educating the school community about Smarter Lunchrooms helps build support. Important groups to inform include school food service staff, building administrators, board of education, teachers and school staff, students, families, and school groups such as the PTA/PTO. The school’s Smarter Lunchrooms leadership team can help the food service program promote the cafeteria’s healthy changes and engage various groups. For more information, on the leadership team, see “[Step 1 — Identify a Smarter Lunchrooms Leadership Team](#)” on page 4.



Colorful nutrition posters on the serving line at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School in New London

STEP 8 — EVALUATE AND MAINTAIN

The food service director and cafeteria manager should regularly review whether the day-to-day cafeteria operations are consistent with the chosen Smarter Lunchrooms strategies. Evaluation determines how well the strategies are implemented, and if they are working.

A good evaluation plan does not need to be extensive or complicated. It can include the review of existing local data such as meal participation and production records, or new data such as plate waste and student surveys. Examples of evaluation data for Smarter Lunchrooms include:

- surveys of students, parents and staff;
- meal participation rates;
- fruit and vegetable consumption;
- consumption of white versus flavored milk;
- food waste;
- purchases of competitive foods (a la carte sales); and
- other local school nutrition program data.



Vegetable selections at Cutler Middle School in Groton

The Maryland State Department of Education’s [Project Refresh Toolkit](#) contains several survey tools, including student and food service staff surveys and a student/staff interactions observation tool.

Promote Success

Conducting regular evaluation helps ensure the school’s ongoing success with Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, and can be used to promote the healthy changes to the school community. Use evaluation results to let students, families and school staff know about the cafeteria’s successes. Some examples include:

- testimonials from students and school staff;
- before and after photos;
- press releases for the media, e.g., local newspapers and television stations;
- articles in school newsletters, e.g., student/parent newsletters, and on the school/district’s Web site;
- information on the school’s social media accounts, e.g., Facebook, Twitter and Instagram;
- reports to the local board of education or school governing authority; and
- presentations to school groups, e.g., parent open house and school staff in-service days.

For information on effective communication strategies for school nutrition programs, see [“Tried and True Tips for Clearly Communicating Your Messages,”](#) by Dayle Hayes, M.S., R.D.

Evaluation Resources

The resources below address Smarter Lunchrooms evaluation.

- Data (B.E.N. Center):
<http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/nttt-april-data-4.pdf>
- DPIE (Diagnose, Prescribe, Implement, Evaluate) General Observation Checklist (B.E.N. Center): http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/dpie_evaluation_observation_checklist.pdf
- Evaluation Matrix (B.E.N. Center):
http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/dpie_lunchroom_0-5_evaluation_matrix.pdf
- Lunchroom Self-Assessment Score Card (B.E.N. Center):
http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/lunchroom_self-assessmt_score_card.final_4-3-14.pdf
- Putting Thought into Action: DPIE (Diagnose, Prescribe, Implement, Evaluate) (B.E.N. Center): <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/dpie.pdf>

For additional information on evaluation, see the “Evaluation” section of the CSDE’s [Wellness Policies for Schools and Child Care](#) resource list.



Fruit and vegetable selections on the serving line at East Hampton Middle School

3 — Principles for Improving Eating Behaviors

Smarter Lunchrooms focuses on six research-based principles about various environmental cues that influence people’s eating behavior. These principles apply to school lunchrooms, as well as restaurants, food courts and at home.

MANAGE PORTION SIZES

Limit portion sizes of less healthy foods such as cookies, chips and other snack foods. The larger the portion, the more people will eat. Research shows that people will “clean their plate” even after they are full.

Food service staff can manage portion sizes for food items that should be limited – such as noncreditable foods and competitive foods – by using smaller containers, plates and serving utensils. An example is using portion controlled (PC) packets for condiments instead of allowing students to self-serve from bulk dispensers.

Food service staff can portion healthy foods to ensure meal pattern compliance and speed up the serving line. School meals must comply with the required portion sizes in the USDA meal patterns. Pre-portion self-selected foods to help:

- provide the minimum serving size required by the meal patterns;
- increase convenience; and
- speed up the serving line.

A common example for school meals is pre-portioning fruits and vegetables into ½-cup servings to help students comply with the USDA’s requirement to select at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables with each reimbursable meal. Another example is pre-portioning the meat/meat alternate component (e.g., cheese, tuna fish or hummus) for a self-serve salad bar.

Competitive foods include foods and beverages sold to students anytime on school premises other than meals served through the USDA school meal programs. Competitive foods include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte, vending machines, school stores and fundraisers. For more information, see the CSDE’s [Competitive Foods](#) Web page.

Noncreditable foods include foods and beverages that cannot credit toward the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, such as condiments, pudding, bacon and cream cheese. These foods often contain little nutritional value and are high in fat, sugars and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Noncreditable Foods](#).



INCREASE CONVENIENCE

Make healthy foods more convenient. The easier it is to select and eat a food, the more likely people are to eat it. Take advantage of every point of student interaction in the cafeteria and dining areas by making reimbursable meals available at all snack windows and convenience lines.

Make healthy foods easy for students to reach by putting them in the front, on middle shelves. Put less healthy choices such as cookies, chips and other snack foods at the very top or bottom shelves, and in the back.

Food service staff can use the techniques below to make healthy foods convenient.

- Wedge, section, slice or cut whole fruits. This significantly increases the chance of students taking and eating them.
- Make a “meals only” serving line, where pre-packed reimbursable meals are ready for students to grab and go.
- Make a healthy foods grab-and-go line with pre-cut and bagged healthy foods.
- Put healthy foods by the cash register.
- Offer pre-packed hot and cold healthy lunch alternatives on all serving lines.
- Make healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables self-serve, whenever possible.

Convenience in Action

East Hampton Middle School created a new quick and convenient serving line in the dining area by using a large wooden farmer’s cart. The cart offers prepackaged, reimbursable grab-and-go meals, and a la carte fresh fruits, vegetables and milk. This speeds up the regular serving line, and increases students’ selection of healthier salad and sandwich meals.



Grab-and-go reimbursable meals cart at East Hampton Middle School

Convenience in Action

Cutler Middle School's popular salad bar is quick and convenient. Leafy greens and meat/meat alternate choices are pre-portioned in clear plastic containers to ensure proper serving sizes and speed up the line. Cafeteria staff constantly restocks the salad bar during each lunch wave so it looks full and appealing for all students.



Salad bar at Cutler Middle School in Groton



A table full of students' salad bar lunches at Cutler Middle School in Groton

IMPROVE VISIBILITY

Use visibility to encourage healthy choices and discourage less healthy choices. Make healthy foods easy to spot. Students are more likely to choose the first foods they see, and are more likely to eat foods they choose themselves. Food service staff can use the techniques below to help highlight healthy foods and make them more visible.

- **Containers:** Use clear containers for healthy foods and opaque containers for less healthy foods.
- **Line positioning:** Foods displayed more visibly (at eye level or first in line) tend to be chosen more often than other items. Put healthy choices at **students' eye level**, within reach, and in areas of high traffic. Move healthy foods to the beginning of the line, and in front of other foods. **Go vertical!** When serving line space is limited, use tiered baskets and shelving to display healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.



Vegetable choices at Pleasant Valley Elementary School in South Windsor

- **Lighting:** Move foods to well-lit locations or add lighting when possible. Gooseneck lamps provide an inexpensive way to light foods, and are readily available during back-to-school sales in late summer.
- **Signage:** Use attractive well-placed signs to call attention to specific foods. Place signs near the food to attract students' attention. Hang signs over the food, or use table-tents or clear plastic standing frames to display signs on the serving line.

The HFFKA requires that schools must identify foods that are part of the reimbursable meal near or at the beginning of the serving line and prior to the point of service (POS). The POS is the point in the food service operation where staff can accurately determine that a reimbursable free, reduced-price or paid lunch has been served to an eligible child.

Out of sight, out of mind! Research shows that simply seeing foods such as brownies or cookies can lead to unplanned consumption. When unhealthy foods are out of sight, people are much less likely to eat them because they are not thinking about them.



Conversely, highly visible healthy food options can lead to increased consumption of healthier foods. For example, people are more likely to eat carrot sticks when they are pre-cut and stored in a clear container in the refrigerator. School nutrition programs can apply this strategy to the cafeteria by making healthy foods more visible.

See the Signs!

Good signage can motivate students to choose healthy foods. Make sure the cafeteria's signage is doing its job. Signs should be attractive, easy to read, and promote healthy choices and school meals.

Signage Checklist

- The cafeteria has attractive, easy-to-read menu boards just outside or at the beginning of each serving line.
- Each serving line has signs that explain what students can take for a reimbursable meal.
- Each serving line has signs that contain positive messages to encourage students' selection of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods.
- Each cashier's station or POS has signs that use positive language to remind students to choose at least one fruit or vegetable with their meal, e.g., "*Fruit is free with your meal*" or "*Choose any two vegetables.*"
- All serving areas have colorful and attractive posters featuring nutrition education messages.
- All dining areas have colorful and attractive posters featuring nutrition education messages.
- Bulletin boards located in or near the cafeteria promote school meals and provide positive nutrition education messages.
- Staff rotates signs and posters throughout the school year to provide new information, increase student interest and reflect seasonal menu changes.
- Staff replaces signs and posters as soon as they show signs of wear and tear.

Signage Tips

- Print signs from the computer. Make the font simple and bold enough to read. Make sure handwritten signs are neat and attractive.
- Use colors and photographs or clip art to highlight items. Graphics should enhance the sign without making it look too busy.
- Laminate signs and posters for display on walls.
- Use removable adhesive strips or putty to attach signs to sneeze guards or walls. If using tape, put it on the back so it is not visible. Roll it or use double-sided tape.
- Display serving line signs in clear plastic standing frames, or use sign stands. Static-cling signs work well for serving line sneeze guards.
- If possible, use table tents on cafeteria tables to promote menu items and special events such as taste-tests.

For resources on cafeteria signage and posters, see the CSDE's [Menu Planning and Food Production](#) resource list.

Sample Signage



Attractive handwritten posters direct students to the hot and cold lunch lines at Cutler Middle School in Groton



The "1 Terrific Tray" dry-erase menu board poster announces daily lunch choices at Cutler Middle School in Groton



Nutrition posters add color and interest to a serving line wall at Orchard Hill Elementary School in South Windsor



Connecticut Grown posters promote local produce at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

3 | PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING EATING BEHAVIORS



Signs promoting fruits and vegetables on the serving line at Illing Middle School in Manchester



Static-cling signs on the serving line at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor



"Grab N' Go" sign over the grab-and-go line at New London High School



"Treasure Tray" sign at the cashier's station at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

ENHANCE TASTE EXPECTATIONS


Taste expectations are the perception of what a food will taste like based on its description and appearance. When students have positive taste expectations about the cafeteria, they are more likely to buy school meals.

Names, appearance and reputation create expectations. Help students expect healthy foods to taste good by using descriptive menu names, and serving attractive foods with consistent quality. Food service staff can use the strategies below to help increase students' taste expectations.

- **People “eat” with their eyes first.** Present foods in appealing and attractive displays to entice students to take them. Examples include tiered metal baskets or brightly colored bowls and containers instead of steam table pans, and brightly colored student trays instead of trays with drab colors.
- **Name foods** with age-appropriate names or descriptions. The B.E.N. Center’s research shows that children are more likely to take a vegetable when it has a fun and interesting name. For examples, see “Name that Veggie!” on the next page.
- Display **creative names** for menu items on menu boards, bulletin boards and signs, both outside and inside the cafeteria. Menus listed outside the cafeteria get students thinking about their choices before they enter the lunchroom.

Which lunch menu would you rather eat?

<p>Turkey sandwich Salad Apple Milk</p>	<p>Oven-roasted turkey breast on seven-grain harvest bread Crisp salad greens with choice of dressing Crunchy red apple Ice cold low-fat milk</p>
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- Before students even get to the serving line, **use displays, posters, bulletin boards and other colorful messages** to let them know the daily meal choices and provide nutrition education. Continue the use of attractive and visible signage throughout the serving lines. For more information, see “[See the Signs!](#)” on page 17.
- Use **suggestive selling** to focus students on what you want them to choose by inviting them to try specific foods, both verbally and with signage. For more information, see “Use Suggestive Selling” on page 25.

Name that Veggie!

School nutrition programs can create student interest by using **creative, descriptive age-appropriate names** on the lunch menu. Speak to your audience. Use fantasy names for young children, e.g., “super-strength spinach” or “x-ray carrots.” Use descriptive names for older children, e.g., “crunchy garden carrots” or “rosemary roasted potatoes.” Make sure the name is not too complicated. It needs to capture students’ attention, not dissuade purchases.

As appropriate to the school’s grade levels, consider engaging students in creating new menu names as part of classroom nutrition education or a student group activity. Students understand best what appeals to their peers.



A word of caution: Make sure the school menu lives up to the descriptions. If the food sounds good but the taste does not meet the description, students will quickly learn to distrust the menu.

Below are some examples of creative food names for elementary and secondary menus.

Elementary *

- X-ray vision carrots
- Power peas
- Glow-in-the-dark greens
- Dinosaur broccoli trees
- Banana ramas
- Tomato bursts
- Golden pirate’s corn
- Apple crunchers
- Celery swords
- Mighty melon
- Jumping beans
- Razzle dazzle berry
- Super-duper veggies
- Bandit beans
- Mixed-up fruit cup
- Monster mashed potatoes
- Snow White’s applesauce

Secondary

- Succulent summer corn
- Crisp celery and carrot sticks
- Ginger Oriental vegetable stir-fry
- Farm-fresh tomatoes
- Crispy roasted red potatoes
- Maple-glazed butternut squash
- Crunchy red apples
- Zesty zucchini
- Garlic green beans
- Oven-roasted garlic cauliflower
- Honey-glazed carrot coins
- Steamed broccoli bites with lemon
- Parmesan mashed potatoes
- Roasted vegetable medley

* Source: Project Refresh Toolkit. Maryland State Department of Education, 2011.
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Maryland/ReFresh.pdf>

Farm to School

Schools can use locally grown produce to enhance students' taste expectations of school menus. The school nutrition program can promote the cafeteria's farm-to-school connection in a variety of ways, such as:

- promoting locally grown foods on school menus,
- highlighting locally grown fruits and vegetables on the serving line;
- conducting taste-tests to get students excited about new foods and recipes;
- sending recipes home with students; and
- advertising the cafeteria's farm-to-school connection to students, families and school staff through various communication channels, such as the district's Web site and school newsletters.

Connecticut's Farm-to-School Program involves a variety of school experiences and programs about gardening, educating children about nutrition, and purchasing fresh, locally grown farm products. Their Web site includes resources and marketing materials such as [Connecticut Grown Cards](#) to promote locally grown foods. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Farm to School](#) Web page and the Department of Agriculture's [Farm to School Promotional Materials and Programs](#) Web page.

The [Start with Half a Cup](#) collaboration has great tools for promoting local farm to school initiatives, including signage, stickers, [Connecticut Grown fruit and vegetable posters](#), promotions and taste-testing ideas.



Promoting locally grown fruit at Duffy Elementary School in West Hartford



Promoting school recipes using local produce at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

USE SUGGESTIVE SELLING

Suggestive selling includes signs and verbal prompts that **focus customers on what you want them to choose**, and influence them to see and desire specific products. The food service industry typically uses a different approach to suggestive selling than schools.

- *“Would you like fries with that?”*
Restaurants and fast food outlets often use suggestive selling to influence customers to buy unhealthy foods like french fries, soda and desserts.
- *“Would you like a crunchy red apple or fresh garden salad with your lunch?”* School food service staff can use the same technique to help students make **healthy** choices. Suggestive selling in schools should focus on encouraging healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, with food service staff verbally inviting students to try them.



Train servers and cashiers on the importance of suggestive selling, and give them concrete examples of what to say. For examples, see “Tips for Suggestive Selling” on page 26. Position attractive and colorful signage to reinforce messages about healthy choices

Be positive! Staff attitudes (positive and negative) can influence students’ food choices. School food service staff can promote healthy school meals by having positive and pleasant interactions with students, throughout the serving line.

Tips for Suggestive Selling

Variety is key!

- Give students **different choices of healthy foods** such as vegetables and fruits. This makes it more likely that students will find an option they want to choose.
- Encourage students to decide **which** vegetable or fruit choice to take, rather than **whether** to take a vegetable or fruit. Even a simple choice like carrot sticks or celery sticks is better than no choice. When menus include choices such as different vegetables and fruits, students are empowered to make their own decisions and are more likely to choose a balanced meal. This helps students eat healthy, and encourages more students to choose reimbursable meals.
- Serving line staff and cashiers can use the strategies below to help encourage students' selection of healthy reimbursable meals.
 - Use positive language and let students know they have a choice, e.g., *"Would you like a crunchy red apple or some fresh sweet strawberries?"*
 - Describe the choices attractively, using positive language, e.g., *"Do you want crispy green salad or steamed broccoli bites today?"*
 - Avoid questions that students can answer "no." For example, instead of asking, *"Do you want fruit with your meal?"* ask, *"Which fruit would you like with your meal?"*
 - Avoid making statements about rules and regulations, e.g., *"The USDA requires you to take a fruit or vegetable with your meal"* or *"You must take a fruit or vegetable."*
 - Use language that emphasizes students can make a choice that rounds out the meal and provides a great deal, e.g., *"Which fruit or vegetable would you like to round out your tray for the best meal deal?"*
 - Use positive signage such as *"Fruits and vegetables are free with your meal!"* or *"Get your fresh fruit here today!"* For information on how to use signage for suggestive selling, see "[See the Signs!](#)" on page 17.



Tips for Suggestive Selling, continued

Encouraging selection of a vegetable on the serving line

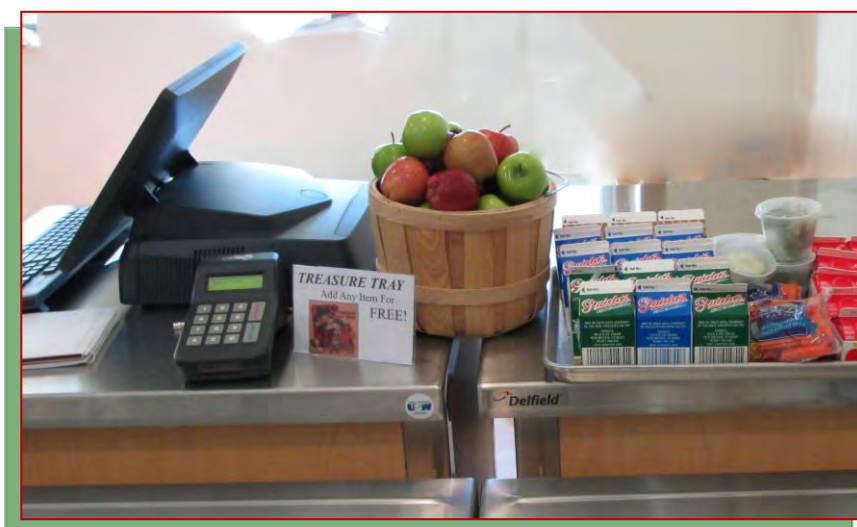
- *“Would you like (insert hot vegetable of the day, e.g., garden green peas) today or would you like (insert cold vegetable/ salad of the day, e.g., raw baby carrots or fresh garden salad)?”*
- *“Would you like some fresh garden salad or crunchy carrot sticks with your pizza?”*



Ensuring fruit or vegetable selection on student’s tray

Position fruit and vegetable trays with positive signage near the cashier, and use encouraging language.

- *“These fruits and vegetables come free with your meal. Which one (or two) would you like?”*
- *“Take your pick from any fruit or vegetable on this tray.”*
- *“Choose your favorite fruit or vegetable.”*
- *“Please choose at least one more fruit or vegetable to round out your tray. Which one would you like?”*



“Treasure Tray” of fruits, vegetables, juice and white milk available at the cash register at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

SET SMART PRICING STRATEGIES

“Bundling” is selling two or more food items together for a discounted price. Fast food restaurants frequently use this strategy to sell value meals or other less healthy foods, such as adding soda and fries to a fast food entree, or selling three 40-cent cookies for one dollar.

Schools can use this strategy to encourage **healthy** food choices and increase students’ selection of reimbursable meals. Examples include bundling a packaged chef’s salad with a whole-grain roll and fresh fruit, or bundling a grab-and-go sandwich with raw vegetables and canned fruit. These bundled options make it easy for students to grab quick, healthy meals.

When determining a la carte prices, avoid bundling less healthy competitive foods such as cookies, chips and similar snacks. The goal of school nutrition programs is to sell more **meals**, not more snacks. **Use a la carte pricing strategies to make school meals the best deal.**

Bundling in Action

East Hampton Middle school used bundling to convert a popular a la carte item into a successful reimbursable meal. The cafeteria staff packaged soft hot pretzels with a variety of meal component items such as bagged apple slices, baby carrots, cheese sticks, hummus and juice. These pre-packed meals are available on all serving lines to create fast grab-and-go reimbursable meal choices for students.



Grab-and-go turkey sandwich lunch at East Hampton Middle School



Grab-and-go salad lunch at Illing Middle School in Manchester

4 — Strategies for Success

Food service staff can help students choose healthy foods and increase their selection of reimbursable meals by using three key behavioral economics concepts: **location, visibility and choice**. These concepts drive the Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.

This section includes strategies from the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement and the B.E.N. Center that help school food service staff to increase students' selection of fruits, vegetables, white milk, targeted entrees, and reimbursable meals.

Most strategies require little time and money, and can help schools make immediate changes. If funds are available, schools can maximize their success by purchasing supplies that enhance Smarter Lunchrooms implementation, such as:

- attractive menu boards;
- serving line signage including display frames and static-cling signs;
- display equipment and supplies for the serving lines and POS, e.g., colorful bowls, attractive linens and tiered metal baskets;
- clear containers and attractive labels for grab-and-go foods; and
- nutrition education posters for the serving and dining areas.

These purchases add value to Smarter Lunchrooms implementation by enhancing the cafeteria's appeal, and creating an attractive, pleasant and welcoming environment. The SMLP schools used a variety of these supplies to enhance Smarter Lunchrooms implementation. For information on potential funding sources for supplies, see "[Step 4 – Identify Resources](#)" in section 2. For information on the SLMP, see the CSDE's [Report on Connecticut's Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover Pilot](#).



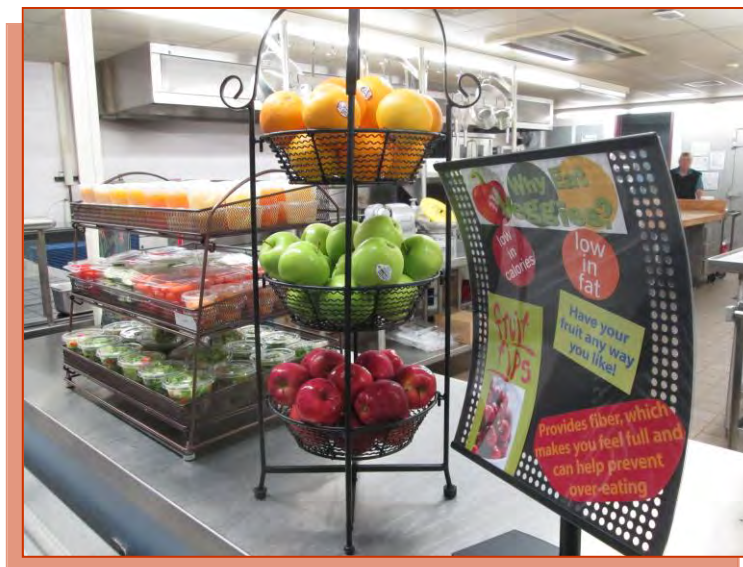
Location • Visibility • Choice

Fruits

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF FRUITS

Strategy 1	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Display fruit in at least two locations per line, including near the cash register. *</p>	<p>Students often overlook fruit because it is hard to see and reach, hidden under a sneeze shield in a drab metal bin.</p> <p>Move fruit into the spotlight! Increasing students' exposure to fruit (especially in traffic-jam areas like near the register) increases the likelihood they see it, which increases their chances of taking and eating it.</p>	<p>Make fruit available at least twice along the lunch line, either by repeating options or by offering two or more options in different places.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible locations include on a salad bar, in a cooler, on a snack rack and beside the register. • Display canned fruit and fresh fruit separately. • Highlight fruit offerings with a sign, e.g., "Last chance for fruit!" or "Fresh fruit today!" For more information, see "Improve Visibility" and "See the Signs!" in section 3. 	<p>TIME 10-30 minutes (moving the fruit, creating reminder signs)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-3 (no cost to move the fruit, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see "See the Signs!" in section 3.</i></p>

* **Food Safety Note:** Connecticut's Public Health Code 19-13 B42 requires that food is "protected." Schools should check with their local health department regarding how to display fruits and vegetables so they meet the state requirements.



Fruit and vegetable selections at East Hampton Middle School

Fruits

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF FRUITS

Strategy 2	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Display whole fruits in a bowl or basket instead of stainless steel bins or trays. *</p>	<p>Bright and contrasting colors make food look more appetizing, and the appearance of variety prompts people to eat more.</p>	<p>Place whole fruits in an attractive bowl or basket to draw students' eyes. Use color to make foods pop and look more appealing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use brightly colored ceramic or plastic mixing bowls, woven baskets or tiered metal baskets. • If metal steam table chafing pans are the only option, line them with brightly colored cloth napkins or placemats, and place on contrasting color tablecloths. • Create color contrast by mixing whole fruits, e.g., apples with oranges, bananas with pears or all whole fruits together. • If desired, wrap edible-peel fruits (like apples) in clear plastic, or slice and place in baggies. * 	<p>TIME 5-15 minutes (moving the fruit, wrapping in plastic, if desired *)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-15 (check thrift stores and discount stores for inexpensive bowls, linens and supplies)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase tiered metal baskets to display fruits.</i></p>

* **Food Safety Note:** Connecticut's Public Health Code 19-13 B42 requires that food is "protected." Schools should check with their local health department regarding how to display fruits and vegetables so they meet the state requirements.



Fruit baskets on the serving line at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

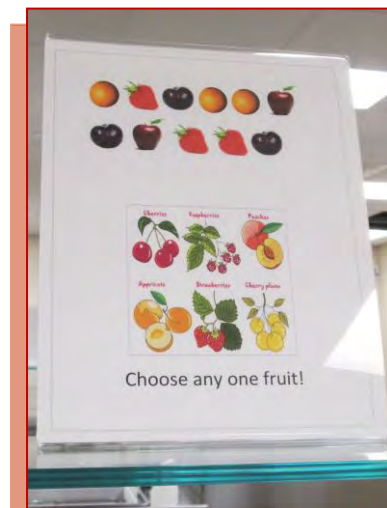
Fruits

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF FRUITS

Strategy 3	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Employ signs and verbal prompts to draw attention to fruit and encourage them to take it.</p>	<p>Signs grab students' attention and direct it to the fruit options.</p>	<p>Create brightly colored signs to grab students' attention. Post near fruit. Direct food servers and cashiers to remind students that fruit is included with their meal.</p> <p>Avoid simply placing fruit on a student's plate, as it will likely go uneaten. Letting students choose to take fruit increases the likelihood they will eat it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible locations for signs include on a menu board ("Today's Fruit Specials"), hanging above the fruit stations ("Fresh fruit today!," "Last chance for fruit!," "Fruit included with meals!") and by the register ("Did you grab some fruit for later?") • Be creative! Use school colors and mascots to personalize your message, e.g., "[Mascot] says, Don't forget fruit!" • Train food servers, cashiers and lunchroom monitors to smile and prompt students to take fruit. Place reminder cards with sample prompts at all work stations. For more information, see "Tips for Suggestive Selling" in section 3. 	<p>TIME 30 minutes (creating reminder signs and staff reminder cards, staff training)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-3 (no cost to move the fruit, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase static-cling signs for the serving line or standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see "See the Signs!" in section 3.</i></p>



Static-cling fruit sign on the serving line at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor



Signage promoting fruit on the serving line at Ilkling Middle School in Manchester

Vegetables

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF VEGETABLES

Strategy 1	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Give vegetables creative/descriptive age-targeted names and display the names on cards next to or with the vegetables on the serving line *</p>	<p>Students often overlook vegetables because they are hard to see and reach, hidden behind a serving counter or under a sneeze shield. Drab, boring names like “beans” or “corn” downplay their appeal.</p> <p>Move vegetables into the spotlight! Increasing students’ taste expectations increases their likelihood of noticing and taking vegetables, and eating them.</p> <p>Additionally, signs grab students’ attention and direct it to the vegetable options.</p>	<p>Add a fun or descriptive adjective in front of vegetable names. Place the names on cards on the serving line near the vegetables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make names age-appropriate. Younger students like fanciful names like “<i>x-ray vision carrots</i>” and “<i>super-strength spinach</i>.” Older students prefer descriptive adjectives like “<i>succulent summer corn</i>” and “<i>crisp celery and carrots</i>.” For more information, see “Name that Veggie” in section 3. • Create brightly colored name cards for the vegetables. • Display name cards on the lunch line. Fold and place on counter, or attach to serving window or ledge with tape (on back only), magnets or magnetic clips. 	<p>TIME 20-30 minutes (renaming vegetables, creating name signs)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-3 (no cost to rename veggies, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see “See the Signs!” in section 3.</i></p>

*** Food Safety Note:** Connecticut’s Public Health Code 19-13 B42 requires that food is “protected.” Schools should check with their local health department regarding how to display fruits and vegetables so they meet the state requirements.



Vegetables choices at Cutler Middle School in Groton

Vegetables

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF VEGETABLES

Strategy 2	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Display the creative/descriptive age-targeted names on a poster or menu board outside the cafeteria.</p>	<p>Students often overlook vegetables because they are hard to see and reach, hidden behind a serving counter or under a sneeze shield. Drab, boring names like “beans” or “corn” downplay their appeal.</p> <p>Move vegetables into the spotlight! Increasing students’ taste expectations increases their likelihood of noticing and taking vegetables, and eating them.</p> <p>Additionally, signs grab students’ attention and direct it to the vegetable options.</p>	<p>After renaming the vegetables, display the new names where students will see them, before entering the cafeteria. Get students thinking about the vegetables while they are hungry and planning their purchases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible locations include on a poster, menu board or bulletin board outside the cafeteria. • A great location idea is on the wall where kids wait in line to buy lunch. • Attractiveness counts! Print or write or neatly, and use brightly colored ink. For more information, see “See the Signs!” in section 3. 	<p>TIME 5-20 minutes (writing names daily, creating a poster or menu board)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-5 (possible ink/paper costs to make a poster or menu board)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase static-cling or professionally printed signs for the serving line.</i></p>



Static-cling vegetable sign on the serving line at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor



Sign promoting vegetables on the serving line at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

Vegetables

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF VEGETABLES

Strategy 3	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Create a Student Nutrition Action Committee (SNAC) of students responsible for naming vegetables and creating signage.</p>	<p>A group of motivated students is more likely to understand what appeals to their peers. Engage students to help make lunchroom changes that truly appeal to young people. An added benefit is free help to maintain your changes!</p>	<p>Create a SNAC of six to ten members. Give them a list of the most common vegetables served in the lunchroom and ask them to create age-appropriate names.</p>	<p>TIME 2-4 hours (to organize student SNAC and hold a renaming meeting)</p> <p>MONEY \$0</p>



Fruit and vegetable selections on the serving line at Cutler Middle School in Groton

Entrees

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF TARGETED ENTREES			
Strategy 1	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Make the entree with the greatest nutrient density the first or most prominent in line.</p> <p>Nutrient-dense foods are relatively rich in nutrients for the calories contained.</p>	<p>Hungry students are more likely to select the first item they see. Use this behavior to give healthy "target entrees" an advantage.</p>	<p>Rearrange serving pans to place a targeted healthy entree first in the serving line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place a target hot entree first in the hot lunch serving line. • Place healthy sandwiches and prepackaged salads in a prominent position by the grab-and-go window. Place less healthy snacks away from the window. • For added appeal, place vegetables near the target hot entree, and coordinate vegetables to complement the entree. 	<p>TIME 5-10 minutes</p> <p>MONEY \$0</p>



School lunches at CREC International Magnet School in South Windsor

Entrees

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF TARGETED ENTREES			
Strategy 2	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Give targeted entrees creative/descriptive age-targeted names and display the names on cards next to or with the targeted entrees on the serving line.</p>	<p>Students often overlook healthy entrees (especially new recipes) because they are hard to see, hidden behind the serving counter. Drab, boring names like “bean burrito” or “turkey” downplay their appeal.</p> <p>Students trust known foods like burgers and pizza. They need a prompt to try something new and different.</p> <p>Move targeted entrees into the spotlight! Increasing students' taste expectations increases their likelihood of noticing and taking new dishes, and eating them. Additionally, signs grab students' attention and direct it to the targeted entrees.</p>	<p>Add a fun or descriptive adjective in front of targeted entree names. Place the names on cards on the line near the entrees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make names age-appropriate. Younger students like fanciful names like “super tuna noodles” and “big bad bean burrito.” Older students prefer descriptive adjectives like “Tuscan tomato pie” and “savory turkey dinner.” • Create brightly colored name cards for the targeted entrees. • Display name cards on the lunch line. Fold and place on counter, or attach to serving window or ledge with tape (on back only), magnets or magnetic clips. • Avoid using the word “healthy” in food names. Cornell’s research has shown that giving a food the title “healthy” actually decreases its sales. For younger students, focus on fun associations or taste. For older students, focus on texture. 	<p>TIME 20-30 minutes (renaming vegetables, creating name signs)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-3 (no cost to rename veggies, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see “See the Signs!” in section 3.</i></p>



Signs identifying sandwiches at Bennie Dover Middle School in New London

Entrees

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF TARGETED ENTREES			
Strategy 3	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Display the creative/descriptive age-targeted names on a poster or menu board outside the cafeteria.</p> <p>Additional Tip: Create a SNAC of students responsible for the naming targeted entrees and creating signage.</p>	<p>Signs grab students' attention and direct it to the targeted entrees.</p>	<p>After renaming the targeted entree, display the new names where students will see them before entering the cafeteria. Get students thinking about the targeted entrees while they are hungry and planning their purchases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible locations include on a poster, menu board or bulletin board outside the cafeteria. • A great location idea is on the wall where kids wait in line to buy lunch. • Attractiveness counts! Write or print neatly and use brightly colored ink. 	<p>TIME 5-20 minutes (writing names daily, creating a poster or menu board)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-5 (possible ink/paper costs to make a poster or menu board)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, have signs professionally printed.</i></p>



Signs identifying sandwiches at Bennie Dover Middle School in New London

Milk

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF UNFLAVORED MILK

Strategy 1	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Place white milk first in the milk cooler, in front of flavored milk. *</p>	<p>Students are more likely to take the first item they see if it is easy to grab.</p>	<p>Reorganize the milk coolers so that white milk is in front of all flavored milk choices, and is the most visible and easiest to grab.</p> <p>Stock coolers at least 50 percent full of white milk.</p> <p>Use posters and decorations that encourage milk consumption.</p>	<p>TIME 5-10 minutes</p> <p>MONEY \$0 (potential cost for posters)</p>

* The USDA regulations require that schools must offer at least two different varieties (fat content and/or flavor) of unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). Whole, reduced-fat (2%) and flavored low-fat milk cannot be served



White milk prominently displayed in the milk cooler at Bennie Dover Middle School in New London


Reimbursable Meals

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF REIMBURSABLE MEALS			
Strategy 1	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Place the components of a reimbursable meal at the snack window. * Add a reimbursable meal grab-and-go bag to the window.</p> <p>* Do not include deserts, snacks, or competitive foods in this line.</p>	<p>Convenience counts! During a busy lunch period, time is students' most valuable commodity. Students will often grab a snack or skip lunch altogether, rather than wait in a long line for a full meal, even when they are hungry.</p> <p>Hungry, time-pressed students are more likely to order foods that take little time to serve and select. Use this behavior to give healthy reimbursable meals an advantage, while improving meal participation and income.</p>	<p>Rearrange or create a snack window and place grab-and-go reimbursable meal components right in front, where students will see them. Pre-assemble reimbursable meals in convenient grab-and-go bags. Move snacks away from the window to make room for reimbursable meal foods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include healthy, convenient reimbursable meal foods that sell well such as sandwiches/subs, prepackaged salads, yogurt parfaits (yogurt with fruit and granola), bagged lunches, finger-food sides (raw veggie packs, whole fruits and sliced fruits in bags or cups), milk and juice. • Place snacks behind the counter or against a back wall to make room for reimbursable meal components in front. • Highlight the new offerings with a sign, such as "Short on time? Try this line!" or "In a hurry? Sandwiches and salads are grab and go!" 	<p>TIME 10-30 minutes or more (rearranging window and making signs takes about 10-30 minutes; possible added prep time for bagged lunches varies per kitchen)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-5 (no cost to move food, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see "See the Signs!" in section 3.</i></p>



Grab-and-go cooler with healthy meals and a la carte choices at East Hampton Middle School

Reimbursable meals

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF REIMBURSABLE MEALS			
Strategy 2	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Move all competitive foods – such as chips and cookies – behind the serving counter in the regular lunch line so they are available by request only.</p> 	<p>Children and adolescents are impulsive and will frequently grab snacks even when they planned to eat a full meal. With limited funds, students end up replacing the meal with snacks rather than supplementing it. As a result, the lunchroom loses money by losing reimbursable meal sales.</p> <p>By placing snacks where they are only available by request, reimbursable meals regain the time advantage and students think twice before replacing meals with snacks. This can nudge students to make healthier choices without eliminating snacks.</p>	<p>Rearrange snack displays so students must ask for items instead of selecting them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place snack racks on table or desk behind the serving counter or hang on a back wall. For an additional health bonus, offer finger-food sides (raw veggie packs, whole fruits and sliced fruits in bags or cups) on the same rack as snacks. Give healthier snacks the price advantage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make healthier snacks less expensive than less healthy snacks. Even 5-10 cents will make a big difference in promoting healthy snack sales. Advertise this cost difference by posting prices directly on the rack next to the snacks. Use printed signs and brightly colored ink to grab students' attention. Avoid bundling less healthy competitive foods such as cookies and snacks.. Use a la carte pricing strategies to make school meals the best deal. For more information, see "Set Smart Pricing Strategies" in section 3. Place healthiest items at eye level and less healthy items lower. For example, finger-food sides (raw veggie packs, whole fruits and sliced fruits in bags or cups) at eye level on middle shelves, and cookies and baked chips at the very top or bottom. 	<p>TIME 5-15 minutes (moving the rack, rearranging snacks and posting price signs)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-3 (no cost to move items, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see "See the Signs!" in section 3.</i></p>

Reimbursable Meals

INCREASING STUDENTS' SELECTION OF REIMBURSABLE MEALS			
Strategy 3	Why It Works	How To Do It	Cost
<p>Create a HEALTHY-CHOICES ONLY convenience line or window stocked with a variety of healthy foods such as milk, fruits, veggies, premade sandwiches and salads and entree items lowest in fat and sodium. *</p> <p>* Existing snack lines or windows can often be converted to a "healthy choices" line. Do not include desserts, snacks, or competitive foods in this line.</p>	<p>Convenience counts! During a busy lunch period, time is students' most valuable commodity. Students will often grab a snack or skip lunch altogether, rather than wait in a long line for a full meal, even when they are hungry.</p> <p>Hungry, time-pressed students are more likely to order foods that take little time to serve and select. Use this behavior to give healthy reimbursable meals an advantage, while improving meal participation and income.</p>	<p>Convert one line or window to healthy items only service. Stock with a variety of snacks and entree options, with the focus on grab-and-go service that is as quick as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrees: Offer sandwiches/subs, prepackaged salads, yogurt parfaits (yogurt with fruit and granola) and bagged lunches. Offer the lowest fat and sodium entree, if possible. Food Safety Note: <i>Schools should check with their local health department regarding temperature regulations for entree foods.</i> • Drinks: Offer milk, juice and water. • Snacks: Offer finger-food sides such as raw veggie packs, whole fruits and sliced fruits in bags or cups. If offering snack foods such as cookies, chips and ice cream, place behind healthy foods. • Advertise! Place an attractive, brightly colored sign above the line or window that emphasizes students can get full reimbursable meals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasize the time savings: <i>"Short on time? Pick this line! Sandwiches and salads are grab and go!"</i> ○ Avoid using the word "healthy" in menus. Cornell's research has shown that giving a food the title "healthy" actually decreases its sales. Better options are signs like <i>"Fresh Bites," "Fresh Express"</i> and <i>"Fast & Fresh."</i> • Offer less healthy snacks in regular lines only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cover the transparent top of ice cream freezers with decorative paper. ○ Place snacks on rack behind counter or on back wall, where students must ask for them. ○ Offer snacks only after the meal service. 	<p>TIME 30-60 minutes (rearranging snack window and regular lines, creating signs)</p> <p>MONEY \$0-5 (no cost to rearrange foods, possible ink/paper costs to make signs)</p> <p><i>If funds are available, purchase standing plastic frames to display signs. For more information, see "See the Signs!" in section 3.</i></p>

5 — SLMP

This section summarizes guidance from the SLMP cadre team and SLMP schools to help other schools be successful with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms. It includes lessons the learned from the experiences of the six SLMP schools.

From January 2014 through June 2015, the CSDE conducted the SLMP in six Connecticut schools, as part of a 2013 Team Nutrition grant from the USDA. The purpose of the SLMP was to identify effective strategies for changing the cafeteria environment to positively influence students' daily food choices, and make them more consistent with the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

SLMP Schools

- **Bennie Dover Middle School**, New London (Grades 6-8)
- **CREC International Magnet School**, South Windsor (Grades K-5)
- **Cutler Middle School**, Groton (Grades 6-8)
- **East Hampton Middle School**, East Hampton (Grades 6-8)
- **Illing Middle School**, Manchester (Grades 7-8)
- **New London High School**, New London (Grades 9-12)

The CSDE implemented the SLMP in collaboration with the University of Connecticut's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, and Cornell's B.E.N. Center. The Rudd Center conducted plate waste collections and SLMP data analysis. The B.E.N. Center provided training and technical support on Smarter Lunchrooms implementation.

The CSDE selected the pilot schools through a competitive application process. Each school received a \$5,000 stipend to support implementation of the SLMP, and complete all required activities. A team of two Smarter Lunchrooms cadre members helped each pilot school assess the cafeteria operations, and develop and implement local Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.

The CSDE and Rudd Center collected data at baseline (spring 2014) and during the intervention year (school year 2014-15). For information on the SLMP results, see the CSDE's [*Report on Connecticut's Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover Pilot*](#).



ADVICE FROM THE SLMP CADRE TEAM

While all pilot schools made positive changes to improve the cafeteria and promote healthy choices for students, the Smarter Lunchrooms strategies and extent of implementation varied across schools. During their work with the pilot schools, the SLMP cadre team observed several key elements that contributed to success with implementing and sustaining Smarter Lunchrooms. These elements are summarized below.

- **The food service director and cafeteria manager are fully committed to Smarter Lunchrooms implementation.** Pilot schools were most successful when the food service director and cafeteria manager:
 - provided strong leadership, specific guidance and ongoing support;
 - involved food service staff in all phases of the Smarter Lunchroom makeover;
 - provided ongoing education and training for all food service staff;
 - promoted positive attitudes, suggestive selling and strong customer service;
 - facilitated ongoing communication about Smarter Lunchrooms between all food service staff, including site production and office staff; and
 - regularly assessed how well the cafeteria was implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, and if they were working.

The leadership of the food service director and cafeteria manager determined how food service staff responded to the changes, and in turn, the staff's success at implementing and maintaining them.



- **The food service staff believes in and supports the Smarter Lunchrooms principles.** When staff understands the importance of Smarter Lunchrooms, they are more committed to making and sustaining the changes. For information on building staff support, see [“Step 5 — Educate and Train School Staff”](#) in section 2.

- **Building administrators believe in and support the Smarter Lunchrooms principles.** Administrative support emphasizes the importance of school meals, and promotes a positive message to the entire school community. For information on building administrative support, see “[Step 5 — Educate and Train School Staff](#)” in section 2.
- **The food service staff consistently implements Smarter Lunchrooms strategies over time.** Paying attention to details helps sustain the positive changes throughout the school year. Some examples from the pilot schools include:
 - providing attractively prepared foods that are always highly visible and convenient, such as using clear containers for grab-and-go meals, yogurt parfaits and entree salads, and tiered display stands for fruits and vegetables;
 - continually restocking foods throughout the meal service so the serving lines look as good for the last child as they did for the first;
 - replacing signage and posters as soon as they are torn or worn out;
 - regularly rotating cafeteria signage, posters and nutrition education messages on bulletin boards; and
 - training food service substitutes on how to implement Smarter Lunchrooms strategies when regular staff members are absent.



Tiered POS fruit and vegetable display at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School

This attention to detail and consistency of implementation is critical to developing and maintaining a positive and pleasant cafeteria environment that meets students’ expectations every day. For information on the principles for improving eating behaviors, see [section 3](#). For information on strategies for success, see [section 4](#).

- **The cafeteria regularly collaborates with school groups, community programs and nutrition organizations.** School collaborations that support, enhance and promote Smarter Lunchrooms encourage success. Some examples from the pilot schools include classroom-cafeteria nutrition education, PTO partnerships, Farm to School, FoodCorps, Fuel Up to Play 60 and Cooking Matters. For information on developing collaborations, see [section 2](#).

ADVICE FROM THE PILOT SCHOOLS

At the end of the project, the pilot schools completed a survey about their perceptions of the successes, benefits and challenges of implementing Smarter Lunchrooms, including reactions of students, school staff and parents. They also provided guidance to help other schools be successful with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies. Their responses are summarized below.

Successes

What successes did you have with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms in the pilot school?

- Overall, the process went smoothly. The most noticeable success was the increased consumption of fresh fruits.
- Site food service staff was positive and cooperative throughout the grant, and has a good working knowledge of the Smarter Lunchrooms principles. They saw student behaviors change as we implemented the strategies, and appreciated that they were part of an important program improvement project.
- Our success was that participation for breakfast and lunch jumped up. The other success we had was replicating the SLMP at three other schools, and seeing the same increases in participation. Smarter Lunchrooms does work!
- The students seemed to be taking more fruits and vegetables, and they liked the new baskets and bowls for display.
- We feel that students were taking more fruits and vegetables. They commented that the serving line looked very nice. The students also responded very well to the grab-and-go station.
- Students are eating more fruits and vegetables.



Fruit and vegetable selections on the serving line at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School

Benefits

What benefits do you see in the pilot school's cafeteria as a result of implementing Smarter Lunchrooms?

- Strategically offering healthy options can influence students' food selections.
- The food service staff is informed about Smarter Lunchrooms strategies, and is able to consider additional changes in the future. The rest of the school community is more willing to collaborate with the food service program on activities and events. Throughout the pilot, we collaborated with the PTO to conduct monthly taste tests for new healthy vegetable side dishes. One class made a tasting suggestion based on a book they were reading in their world culture lesson. All teachers assisted in sending monthly tasting recipes and activity sheets home with students. Students are much more likely to arrive at the POS with a reimbursable meal on the tray, and to consume the foods they have selected.
- Students are getting a greater variety of more appealing fruits and vegetables in a healthier environment!
- Students are participating in the lunch program, and taking the hot lunch. Students appreciated the a la carte station being moved away from the lunch line, so it does not crowd the end of the service area.
- We see more students taking hot lunch and participating in the lunch program. Students appreciate the convenience of the grab-and-go meals.
- Students are open to trying the fruits and vegetables. The new posters and display items spruce up the kitchen and cafeteria.

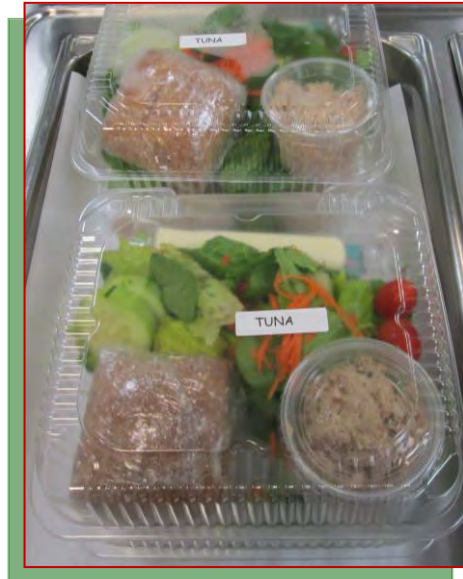


Healthy meals grab-and-go cart at East Hampton Middle School

Challenges

What challenges did you have with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms in the pilot school, and how did you overcome them?

- Our initial challenge was getting the cafeteria staff to buy in and use suggestive selling to encourage students to take more healthy choices. This was resolved after the cafeteria staff saw the students' reactions, and realized that suggestive selling and the other Smarter Lunchrooms strategies worked.
- One of our key leadership team members became ill and was absent for most of the grant. We restructured responsibilities, and adjusted some activities and timelines to accommodate this challenge.
- The cafeteria manager was not completely sold on the Smarter Lunchrooms concepts, and was not particularly supportive of site staff as they moved through the implementation changes. As a result, we did not have a great deal of follow-up action on our activity successes, such as actually putting tasting foods on the regular menu rotation, or adding a more diverse variety of bundled meals. We worked directly with site staff whenever possible to encourage them, and provide assistance and support with the SLMP action plan.
- Our only challenge was trying to get the right trays and equipment, and making sure it met the grant requirements. * The SLMP cadre team was very helpful in terms of support and suggestions. Challenges were minimal.
- Food service staff buy-in was difficult when it came to implementation. Working on making small changes and providing ample staff training helped.
- The challenge we faced was getting all food service staff to buy in to the Smarter Lunchrooms principles. We wanted all staff to be on board, so we held multiple trainings and led by example for some of the strategies.
- We were unsuccessful trying to get a mural on the cafeteria wall. It was very difficult to find someone to paint the mural at a fair price, and it was too big of an undertaking for the art classes.
- We did not experience any challenges.



Grab-and-go salad meals at Illing Middle School in Manchester

* USDA Team Nutrition requirements prohibited grant funds from being spent on food service equipment, such as refrigerators, food processors, pots and utensils. Only certain small display and merchandising equipment were allowable, such as menu boards, signage, bowls and baskets.

Student Reactions

Describe the reactions of students to the Smarter Lunchrooms changes in the cafeteria.

- Our changes were not drastic, so the students were not extremely surprised. Students responded the most to our new serving line of grab-and-go healthy meal choices.
- Students loved the posters placed in the serving lines and outside in the cafeteria. Students in the aftercare program created nutrition-based artwork that was displayed in the dining area. This created a great deal of excitement and conversation.
- The new bundled cold entree meals are very popular, and account for almost 30 percent of total daily reimbursable meals.
- The new colorful menu board was a conversation piece with students, in addition to the main goal of advertising daily meal choices.
- Students were thrilled, and commented on the variety and appearance of food choices.
- Students liked the additions of the grab-and-go cart, and all the new signage.



Parent Reactions

Describe the reactions of parents/families to the Smarter Lunchrooms changes in the cafeteria.

- We did not notice many reactions from parents.
- The PTO volunteers were very supportive of the program changes, and pleased with the selection of monthly tasting items. They appreciated the efforts of the food service program to provide healthier foods and positive ways to engage with students.
- We had pictures at our open houses to show parents how much more nutritious the meals have become, and what we are doing for their students' health. The SLMP showed them that as a district we care, and go the extra mile!
- Parents did not have much of a reaction.
- There was not much of a reaction from parents and families. While we did notify parents that the changes were happening, they did not really respond.
- They were impressed.

Staff Reactions

Describe the reactions of school staff to the Smarter Lunchrooms changes in the cafeteria.

- School staff members were impressed with the grab-and-go line.
- The building staff was very supportive of the changes made during the pilot. They gained a great deal more respect for the challenges of food service staff, and their commitment to food service program improvement. Teachers were receptive to our request to hand out monthly nutrition education activity sheets and recipes for students to take home. Teachers and dining room monitors were good role models for tasting new foods, and being positive about trying new foods.
- Staff participation has increased by 20 percent, and their comments have been very favorable.
- School staff members were receptive to the changes, and appreciated some of the display bowls and baskets used.
- The school staff appreciates some of the changes but others went unnoticed. Our staff responded to the grab-and-go line, and some of the nicer serving and display containers.
- Same comments as the students.



Advice for Other Schools

What advice would you give to other schools to help them be successful with implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies?

- Approach Smarter Lunchrooms with an open mind. Listen to suggestions and be willing to make adjustments as you go.
- It is very important to have everyone truly on board with the goals of Smarter Lunchrooms, from top administrators to daily production staff. Our cafeteria manager did not really support the Smarter Lunchrooms concepts or the proposed changes for the SLMP. This attitude was felt by site staff, and although they were committed themselves, we felt we had to work around instead of with the manager.
- Encourage food service staff not to get discouraged during the early days of implementation. Daily work routines are different, and staff needs some time to rework their production routines and timing. Let them know they can look forward to positive reactions from students and staff, which helps get past the adjustment period.
- It is important to continue the implementation changes and be attentive to details such as rotating signage. This is critical in sustaining the positive changes that initially resulted from the Smarter Lunchrooms action plan.
- Before beginning the SLMP, we thought the work would be more challenging than it actually was. The changes are worth the kitchen staff's effort.
- Make improvements slowly, and provide a lot of training to all staff members who are responsible for implementing the strategies. Be consistent with the changes so that students know what to expect.
- Be patient with the food service staff, and make small changes along the way instead of doing too much at once.
- Be flexible.



Fruit choices at Illing Middle School in Manchester



6 — Resources

CSDE RESOURCE LISTS

The CSDE resource lists are available on the CSDE's [Resources for School Nutrition Programs](#) Web page at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333786.

- *Nutrition Resources:* This list contains online resources related to nutrition guidelines and information, menu planning and food production, special diets, food safety and the USDA Child Nutrition Programs.
- *Healthy School Environment Resources:* This list contains online resources to assist USDA programs with promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320648

Afterschool Snack Program (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/afterschool-snacks

Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&Q=320670

Crediting Foods (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333796

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296):

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/legislation/CNR_2010.htm

Meal Pattern Training Materials (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333806

Meal Patterns (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333770

Menu Planning (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333780

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320678

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/

Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/nutritionstandards.htm

Operational Memos for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322550

Policy Memos for the NSLP (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/policy

Policy Memos for School Meals (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/policy.htm

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320674

Regulations for School Meals (USDA):

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/regulations.htm

School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320662

School Wellness Policies (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=322438

COMPETITIVE FOODS

Competitive Foods (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=333772

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322422

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322420

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=322432

Smarts Snacks Nutrition Standards (CSDE):

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&pm=1&Q=335400

DIETARY GUIDELINES

Choose MyPlate (USDA):

www.choosemyplate.gov/

Choose MyPlate “10 Tips” Handouts (USDA):

www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html

Choose MyPlate Mini Poster (USDA):

www.choosemyplate.gov/sites/default/files/printablematerials/mini_poster.pdf

Dietary Guidelines for Americans (USDA):

www.cnpp.usda.gov/DietaryGuidelines

SMARTER LUNCHROOMS

- 6 Guiding Principles to Improving Eating Behaviors:
<http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/6principles.pdf>
- B.E.N. Center Research on Kids and School:
<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/discoveries-kids>
- Comfortable Cafeterias Webinar (Iowa Department of Education):
<https://www.educateiowa.gov/comfortable-cafeteria-webinar>
- Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (B.E.N. Center):
<http://ben.dyson.cornell.edu/>
- Cornell Food and Brand Lab YouTube Videos:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/FoodandBrandLab>
- Creating Positive and Pleasant Mealtimes for Schools and Early Childhood Programs (Montana Team Nutrition): <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/state-resources/creating-positive-and-pleasant-mealtimes-schools-and-early-childhood-programs>
- Creating Smarter Lunchrooms Online Course (B.E.N. Center):
https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3CVLswwEZI5qdak
- Cues for Positive Communication with Students and Staff:
http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/ChildNutrition_ExternalPublications/Smarter%20Lunchrooms%20Verbal%20Cues-BEN%20Center-2013.pdf
- Healthy Food Choices in Schools:
http://articles.extension.org/healthy_food_choices_in_schools
- Lunch Line Redesign (B.E.N. Center):
<http://ben.dyson.cornell.edu/pdfs/LunchLineREdesignGraphicRedesign.pdf>
- Lunch'd: Part One, Cornell University's Smarter Lunchrooms Initiative:
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/lunchd-part-one>
- Lunch'd: Part Two, Cornell University's Smarter Lunchrooms Initiative:
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/lunchd-part-two>
- Make Fruits and Veggies First, Fast, & Fabulous (B.E.N. Center):
<http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/nttt-sept-firstfastfabulous-4.pdf>
- Nudging Your Students (Iowa State Department of Education):
<https://www.educateiowa.gov/smarter-lunchrooms>
- Philosophy of School Lunchrooms (B.E.N. Center):
http://smarterlunchrooms.org/sites/default/files/philosophy_of_school_lunchrooms_fi_nal.pdf
- Project Refresh Toolkit (Maryland State Department of Education):
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Maryland/ReFresh.pdf>
- Smarter Lunchroom Best Practice Implementation Guide:
http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/ChildNutrition_CFPAPublications/Smarter%20Lunchroom%20BestPracticesImplementationGuide-CTG-2013.pdf

Smarter Lunchrooms: Using Behavioral Economics to Improve Meal Selection:

www.choicesmagazine.org/magazine/article.php?article=87

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Technical Assistance Providers' Handbook (B.E.N. Center 2014): *Available upon request from the B.E.N. Center at ben@cornell.edu.*

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement No Time to Train (B.E.N. Center 2015):

<http://smarterlunchrooms.org/training-materials>

When Nudging in the Lunch Line Might Be a Good Thing (USDA Economic Research Service): www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2009-march/when-nudging-in-the-lunch-line-might-be-a-good-thing.aspx#.V198Ik2FPre

GLOSSARY

a la carte sales: Foods and beverages that are sold separately from reimbursable meals in the USDA school nutrition programs. For more information, see “competitive foods” in this section.

behavioral economics: The science of how environmental cues – such as the packaging, order and placement of food items on the cafeteria line – influence decision-making and help promote healthy choices in school lunchrooms.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA’s federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, see the CSDE’s [Child Nutrition Programs](#) Web page.

competitive foods: Any foods and beverages sold to students anytime on school premises other than meals served through the USDA school meal programs. Competitive food sales include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores and fundraisers. For more information, see “a la carte sales” in this section, and the CSDE’s [Competitive Foods](#) Web page.

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS): State nutrition standards developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education per Section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes. These standards address the nutritional content of all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. They focus on limiting fat, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars, eliminating trans fat, moderating portion sizes and increasing consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats and legumes. All schools in any district that chooses to comply with Healthy Food Certification under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must follow the CNS for all sources of food sales to students, including school cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers and any other sources. The CNS also apply to all snacks served in the ASP. For more information, see the CSDE’s [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) Web page.

creditable food: A food or beverage that can be counted toward meeting the meal pattern requirements for a reimbursable meal or snack in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, see the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods](#) Web page.

dining area: Anywhere food is eaten in a school setting, such as the cafeteria, dining hall, hallway, parking lot, classroom, student lounge and school bus.

food components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the NSLP (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains and meat/meat alternates) and the three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts in the SBP (grains with optional meat/meat alternate substitutions, fruits with optional vegetable substitutions and milk). For more information on the individual food components, see the CSDE's [Crediting Foods](#) Web page.

grab and go: A type of meal service that offers preassembled reimbursable meals that can be easily and quickly selected by students. Grab-and-go meals may include traditional entrees (meat/meat alternates and grains) with fruits, vegetables and milk, or any meal components that together meet the requirements of a reimbursable meal.

Healthy Food Certification: A state statute (Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes) that requires each board of education or governing authority for all public schools participating in the NSLP to certify annually to the CSDE whether they will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. Districts that choose to implement the Connecticut Nutrition Standards receive 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year. For more information, see the CSDE's [Healthy Food Certification](#) Web page.

meal pattern: The required food components and minimum serving sizes that schools and institutions participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. For more information, see the CSDE's [Meal Patterns](#) Web page and *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals*.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. It was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. For more information, see the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program](#) Web page.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that cannot credit toward the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, such as condiments, pudding, bacon and cream cheese. These foods often contain little nutritional value and are high in fat, sugars and sodium. Some examples include maple syrup on pancakes, salad dressing on tossed greens and condiments such as ketchup or mustard on sandwiches and other entrees. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Noncreditable Foods](#).

nutrient-dense foods: Foods that provide substantial amounts of naturally occurring vitamins, minerals and other nutrients with relatively few calories. Nutrient-dense foods include lean sources of protein and/or complex carbohydrates that are low in total fat and saturated fats. Examples include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, lean meat, skinless poultry, fish, eggs and beans. Foods and beverages that are not nutrient dense supply calories (from fat, added sugars and processed carbohydrates) but relatively small amounts of nutrients (and sometimes none at all), unless fortified.

point of service (POS) meal count: The point in the food service operation where staff can accurately determine that a reimbursable free, reduced-price or paid lunch has been served to an eligible child.

pre-plating: A type of meal service where servers assemble some or all meals components ahead of time, such as portioning vegetables on some trays.

production record: A working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods used to prepare school meals. Production records must demonstrate how meals contribute to the required food components, food items or menu items for each day of operation. In addition, these records must provide sufficient documentation to determine how school meals contribute to meeting the weekly dietary specifications. The USDA regulations require that all schools in the NSLP, SBP and ASP must complete daily menu production records for all meals.

reimbursable meals: Meals or snacks that meet the requirements of the USDA regulations for Child Nutrition Programs.

service area: Anywhere food is sold in schools, such as the lunchroom, hallway, classroom, school bus or parking lot.

serving line: The traditional serving area in the cafeteria where school meals are served to students.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure or number of pieces or slices of a food or beverage. Schools must provide the minimum serving sizes specified in the USDA meal patterns for meals and snacks to be reimbursable.





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