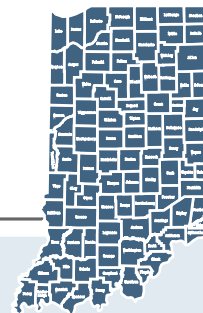


Cafeteria Environment Supports Students in Selecting and Eating the Healthiest Foods in Schools

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SUMMARY

The Indiana State Department of Health's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) is working to create healthier school nutrition environments. To do this, they have partnered with the Indiana Department of Education, a food service consultant and seven school districts to implement smarter lunchroom strategies in the cafeteria.

One of Indiana's strategies is to provide culinary trainings for school food service professionals. The trainings teach culinary skills needed to create appealing, nutritious and appetizing meals for students. Two workshops, The Culinary Skills for A+ Meals and Chef Cyndie Workshops, focus on healthier ways to prepare and present food at schools, support the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and support school nutrition standards requiring schools to offer more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. After the training, a food service consultant is working with several school districts to incorporate newly learned skills and smarter lunchroom techniques in their own nutrition programs.



CHALLENGE

What if you could encourage kids to make healthier food choices simply by changing how foods are displayed in a school cafeteria? What if the placement of foods on school lunch menus could actually make a difference in how often that food was chosen? In Indiana, nearly 1.1 million children are fed by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The average school in Indiana has at least 45% of students eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch. Children who participate in this program have many opportunities to select and consume a balanced diet. However, students often need a nudge to select and eat nutritious foods.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Visit the Indiana Department of Education's Office of School and Community Nutrition (SCN) at <https://www.doe.in.gov/nutrition> for information about the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs and SCN training and education opportunities.

To learn more about the Smarter Lunchroom Movement, visit: <https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/>.

This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

"When we served kiwi fruit whole, only 19 servings were taken. When cut up and displayed in a cup over 100 servings were taken".

-Maggie LaRue, Richmond Community Schools

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SOLUTION

A Smarter Lunchroom is one that nudges students toward selecting and eating nutritious foods. The mission of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement is to equip schools with tools and best practices to create sustainable, research-based lunchrooms that lead children to make healthy choices.

The Smarter Lunchroom provides no-cost or low-cost strategies that lunchrooms can use to increase participation, improve consumption of healthy food and reduce food waste.

RESULTS

Indiana schools chose Smarter Lunchroom Strategies to focus on fruits, vary the vegetables and highlight the salad. Schools learned how to cut fruits and vegetables into wedges, sticks, and slices increasing their use of fresh whole produce. They also introduced students to a greater variety of fruits and vegetables including jicama, colored carrots and cauliflower, squash, roasted vegetables, plums, and Asian pears. Participating schools received a newsletter with tips on creating appealing healthy fruit and vegetable sides, pairing vegetables with a low fat dip, and using catchy descriptive names to entice students to choose fruit and vegetable sides when they go through the line.

U.S. Department of Health and Human
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NCCDPHP

Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

Website

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

School food service professionals in Indiana have many opportunities to learn about smarter lunchroom techniques at state and national conferences, at food shows, in newsletters, in-person and through online trainings. Social media sites like Pinterest and Facebook, national blogs and professional journals also reinforce smarter lunchroom strategies.

Peer-to-peer learning from fellow food service professionals is also important. The Smarter Lunchroom Movement will continue to grow as more and more school districts share their stories about what they are doing to improve school nutrition environments in their cafeterias.

To help sustain success, ISDH partnered with Rogers K-12 Consulting, Inc. to provide one-on-one hands-on technical assistance to food service directors. In addition, the Indiana Department of Education, Team Nutrition, plans to continue bringing trainings to schools all throughout the state to provide continued education and support.



Indiana State
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