

# How Smart is Your Lunchroom?

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## What is a Smarter Lunchroom?

The **Smarter Lunchrooms Movement** is a way to help children make better food choices by changing the environment within the school to encourage healthier choices.

There are two main principles behind the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. The first is that when we force someone into doing something (like taking a certain vegetable), they will often react by resisting it. The second is that when a student feels like they've freely made a choice, they are more likely to eat that food. Instead of forcing students to take certain foods, Smarter Lunchrooms techniques nudge them to make choices by making healthier options more appealing or more convenient.

Key components of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement are designed to target specific areas, such as promoting an entrée of the day, promoting vegetables and salads, increasing sales of reimbursable meals, and encouraging student to choose white milk over flavored milk.

*Turn the page to find out what Smarter Lunchrooms is all about!*



Visit the **Smarter Lunchrooms Movement** website for methods to change children's food choice behaviors through the application of lunchroom-focused principles that promote healthful eating.

<http://smarterlunchrooms.org>



## Moving More White Milk

*Encourage students to consider plain milk as a beverage*

Growing kids need plenty of calcium and vitamin D to support growing bones. Milk is a great way for students to get these nutrients, along with protein and potassium.

Like with fruits and vegetables, offering students a choice of milk is a great way to encourage students to select and drink it. Help students get in the habit of thinking of white milk as a great choice. There are some easy ways to increase the chance that students will choose white milk over flavored.

Rearrange coolers so that white milk is at least 1/3 of all drinks displayed.

Place white milk in front of other drinks so that students must reach around the white milk to get to other drinks.

Place milk first in line, before other drinks so that students must walk past the white milk to get to other drinks.

If your students still prefer flavored milk to white milk, don't fret. It still has all the calcium, vitamin D, and protein as white milk.

## Focusing on Fruit Colorful, Tasty, and Nutrient-Rich

Fruit, one of the five components of a reimbursable meal, is a great source of a variety of nutrients children need, including vitamin C and potassium. What are some ways we can encourage students to select fruit and eat it?

Have you ever heard the phrase "We eat with our eyes first?" It means the way food looks or is presented makes a huge difference in whether we want to eat it. This is true for children, as well as adults. Changing the way fruit is displayed can make a big difference in student choices.

Here are some ideas that you can try in your lunchroom!

Always offer a choice of fruit! Just giving students a chance to choose means they'll be more likely to eat what they select.



Display fruit in attractive bowls or baskets!

Make sure students can see all the great fruit you offer by displaying it at their eye level.

Make fruit available at least twice along the lunch line, either by repeating options or by offering two or more options in different places.

Offer a sliced fruit daily. Not only does it increase eye-appeal, it's easier for younger students to eat.

# What's in a Name?

*Turns out, quite a lot!*

The way a food is described can make a big difference in how we expect it to taste, even when it's the exact same food. In fact, research suggests that people rate the very same dish as tasting *better* just with a change in name. Which would you rather eat—Grilled Chicken, or Fiesta Lime Grilled Chicken?

It doesn't just work on adults. One cost-effective way to nudge students to select certain foods, or try new menu items is to give foods fun or

Studies have shown that labeling a food as "healthy" actually decreases sales. Try using "fresh" to convey a similar idea.

descriptive names. When thinking of new names, take the age of students into account.

Younger students may be drawn to imaginative names like "Silly String Beans," and "X-Ray Vision Carrots" but older students might prefer more descriptive names, such as

"Garlic Roasted String Beans," and "Succulent Summer Squash."

One study found that when carrots were called "X-Ray Vision Carrots," elementary

Younger students like imaginative names while older students prefer more descriptive names.

students ate twice as many compared to when they were called "Food of the Day." Keep in mind that using the word "healthy" in your description might not be a good idea. Studies have shown that labeling a food as "healthy" actually decreases sales. Try using "fresh" to convey a similar idea.



## Increasing Sales of Reimbursable Meals



A reimbursable meal is a great way for students to eat a variety of nutrients that support their health and academic success. But how do we encourage students to choose reimbursable meal over competitive foods? Here are some ideas!

### **Provide Grab-and-Go Meals**

Make it easy and convenient for students to grab a complete reimbursable meal quickly.

### **Move Competitive Foods Behind a Counter**

This way, students will be less likely to choose competitive foods over a reimbursable meal. Out of sight, out of mind.

### **Create a Healthy-Items-Only Convenience Line**

Hungry students will jump at the chance to get in a fast-moving line so they can quickly get back to their friends!

# Promoting Vegetables and Salad

*How can we encourage students to not just select vegetables, but to also eat and enjoy them?*



Get students involved! Create a committee of students responsible for the naming of and creating signage for veggies. Chances are, they're more savvy about what appeals to their peers.

Use fun, brightly colored name cards for the vegetables to help draw attention to them.

Advertise your newly renamed veggies before students even enter the cafeteria. A great option is a poster or menu board outside the cafeteria that students will see on their way in.

There are a lot of different ways you can display your fun name cards. You can fold and place them on the counter, or use tape, magnets, or magnetic clips. The important thing is that they're at student eye level.

## Smarter Lunchrooms Success in Tustin, California!

In Tustin, CA, C.E. Utt Middle School set out to transform the lunchroom and enhance healthy eating habits among students.

The team incorporated changes that included increasing the abundance and variety of fresh fruits and vegetables displayed in a pleasant manner multiple times along the lunch line, and making milk cartons more visible while increasing the white- to flavored- milk ratio. This change doubled the sale of white milk!

Other changes included adding colorful tablecloths to create a welcoming environment for students and moving trash cans away from exits to help decrease food waste.

Learn more at:

<http://thrivingschools.kaiserpermanente.org/feeding-the-falcons-how-one-school-is-increasing-healthy-eating-behavior/>

## Entrée of the Day



Why have an entrée of the day? It's a great way to promote new menu items, or nutrient-dense foods you'd like students to select.

Give the entrée of the day a fun, creative, or descriptive name!

Display the new names where students will see them before they even get to the cafeteria. That way, they'll think about the entrée of the day while they're hungry and deciding what they want to eat.

Promote your daily entrée in all service lines.

Highlight it on signs and menus. Attractiveness counts! Write neatly and use bright, easy to see colors.

Don't limit advertising to just the lunchroom. Also consider promoting the entrée of the day in school announcements, or in the front office.



## Test your knowledge with the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement quiz!

True or False: The following are Smarter Lunchrooms Principles.

1. Ask students math problems in the lunch line.  
 True  
 False
2. Use fun, creative, or descriptive names for menu items.  
 True  
 False
3. Give all foods in the lunch line a grade.  
 True  
 False
4. Increase sales of white milk by no longer serving flavored milk.  
 True  
 False
5. Increase convenience of healthy items.  
 True  
 False
6. Use grab-and-go meals as a way to increase reimbursable meal sales.  
 True  
 False

## The Results are In!

*If you got all six right:*

You are a Smarter Lunchrooms Smarty! Keep getting out there and learning more!

*If you got three to five right:*

You're on the right track! Try finding the information you missed in other pages of this newsletter to become a Smarter Lunchrooms Movement master!

*If you got two or less right:*

It just means you have more opportunities to learn. Read through the newsletter again, or take a look at the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement website at

<http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org>

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