



Transforming the School Cafeteria Environment in Hennepin County

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Background

Hennepin County Public Health secured a 5-year Community Transformation Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address chronic diseases. A need was recognized to ensure school foodservice staff are trained to support healthy eating initiatives such as increasing student intake of fruits and vegetables. University of Minnesota Extension school foodservice team was contracted to conduct trainings in all school districts in Hennepin county.

Training Objectives

- Improve culinary skills of food service staff to prepare fruits and vegetables, including locally grown, that appeal to students
- Understand the health benefits resulting from children meeting the dietary guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption
- Implement behavioral economic techniques to increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables



Training

The three hour workshop includes:

- Learning proper knife techniques
- Hands-on activities: preparation and taste testing of fruits and vegetables
- Learning behavioral economic techniques: “nudging” to encourage students to take fruits and vegetables
- Redesigning a serving line
- Participating in “coaching activities” to encourage students to take more fruits and vegetables

Observed School Foodservice Changes in Hennepin County

- Staff are using more color contrast to highlight produce
- One cook manager discovered that students took more fruit when she used clear plastic cups instead of white paper cups
- Schools are using small pieces of colorful fruit like kiwi to highlight the fruit cups
- When the cashier encourages students to take fruits and vegetables as they enter the lunch room, more students are taking them

Program Evaluation Results



Evaluations indicate a strong intent by participants to use culinary and behavioral techniques to enhance their school nutrition program to improve student health.

To date, the training has been conducted in seven Hennepin County School Districts reaching over 400 school food service staff.