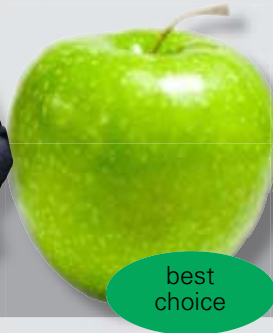


InnovationLINK.....



best
choice



choose
occasionally



choose
rarely

School Vending Machines Can Make a Difference

Addressing the Obesity Epidemic

Offering nutritious snack foods can be effective without decreasing the number of snacks sold and while maintaining financial stability of school food service programs.

Influencing Healthy Snack Selection by Middle and High School Students

The obesity epidemic is well-documented in our society. Among the contributing factors is the high level of American children's consumption of snack foods and beverages that contain added sugars and oils.

Schools can play an important role in shaping children's lifetime dietary habits by providing nutritious foods and teaching them to make wise food selections. The school vending machine is one place where schools can have an impact on the quality of foods offered.

To assist schools, registered dietitian **Jaime Foster** of the college's Department of Human Nutrition and OSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences joined with Columbus Children's Hospital to design a practical tool to measure the nutritional value of vended snack foods.

The goal was to create a research-based vending machine software program—with corresponding educational materials—that would positively influence students to make nutritious choices.

At the same time, the partners

wanted to show that offering nutritious snack foods can be effective without decreasing the number of snacks sold and while maintaining financial stability of school food service programs.

A Rating System Educates Kids about Choices

Working with Children's Hospital staff, Foster helped create a nutrition rating system for processed foods offered in vending machines. The computer software program gives you an easy way to enter nutritional data and learn the category of snacks. Green means "best choice," yellow signals "choose occasionally," and red warns "choose rarely."

Unlike many rating programs, the program, which is called *Snackwise*, evaluates more than the calories, fat, saturated fat, and sugar content of processed foods. It also evaluates the following desirable nutrients that adolescents need for healthy development:

- Calcium
- Fiber
- Iron
- Protein
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C

Educational labels coded red, yellow, and green on the vending machine and on the products educate the purchasers about their choices.

Snackwise also offers flexibility, which again sets it apart from other nutrition rating systems. School administrators can offer a variety of snacks in each category, promoting healthier snack selections without compromising sales or financial stability. By offering a variety of choices, administrators encourage interest in healthier options while they maintain control over what is offered.

Survey Results: Encouraging Healthy Choices without Lowering Revenue

Deb Kellee, the DECA teacher at Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green, Ohio, learned about *Snackwise* from the OSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences educator in her county, **Doris Herringshaw**. With guidance from Herringshaw, Kellee and her marketing students implemented the program at the high school.

The Bowling Green students conducted a marketing campaign that went beyond the information

(continued)

provided at the school vending machine and focused on the new and healthy choices. They developed and administered a survey to their fellow students to learn the impact of their efforts and analyzed the data.

least somewhat influenced by the educational campaign. A total of 64 percent said they noticed the rating stickers on the merchandise.

Sales results for the three snack categories tell the most significant

revenue changes as a result of the campaign.

Do you have questions or would like your staff to hear about the use of nutrition rating systems for school vending machines? Please contact:

Respondents were asked, **"If you chose a 'green' or 'yellow' snack, why did you choose it?"**

- 56 percent said they chose it because they wanted a healthy snack or because they liked the snack.

Respondents were asked, "If you chose a 'green' or 'yellow' snack, why did you choose it?" A total of 56 percent said they chose it because they wanted a healthy snack or because they liked the snack.

In the marketing campaign, the DECA students used a variety of marketing tactics, including the following:

- Educational posters in the halls and near vending machines
- A handout for all students and a letter home to parents at the beginning of the year
- A display case in the main hallway showing healthy options sold in the vending machines

The students' survey showed that 59 percent of respondents were at

story. At the start of the school year, the purchase of red foods was high. This trend declined in November and December, most likely due to holiday breaks. However, January through March saw a steady increase in the purchase of green and yellow foods and a decline in red foods. The volume of red food sales continued to drop for the rest of year.

The sales figures also showed that after the nutritional vending machine program was initiated, sales volume from the snack machine was significantly higher. In terms of overall revenue, the school actually saw positive

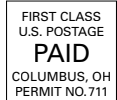
Jaime Foster, RD, LD, MPH
Department of Human Nutrition
College of Education and Human Ecology
The Ohio State University
(614) 292-3538
foster.461@osu.edu,
until March 23, 2007

or Jan Ritter, RD, LD, SFNS
Columbus Children's Hospital
(614) 722-3465
ritterj@pediatrics.ohio-state.edu.

For more about *Snackwise*,
visit www.snackwise.org.



127 Arps Hall
1945 N. High St.
Columbus, OH 43210-1172



School Vending Machines

best choice

A series to explore solutions with school districts

Inspiring innovation in learning and living

InnovationLINK shares research findings and evidence-based practices meant to help districts explore solutions to the complex problems they face. As a new college with a new vision, the diverse nature of our academic experts is our greatest strength. It creates the ability to spark new solutions and imagine new possibilities for learners of all ages, families, consumers, and communities. If you have requests for topics or feedback on this issue or this series, please let us know at our Office of Communications, (614) 292-5338.

InnovationLINK