

Title V / Maternal and Child Health Impact Story: April 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017

MCH Grantee (check box):

- Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health
- Fargo Cass Public Health
- Grand Forks Public Health Department
- North Dakota State University
- South East Education Cooperative

North Dakota Maternal and Child Health Priority Area (check box):

- Increase the rate of breastfeeding at 6 months
- Reduce overweight and obesity in children

In a sentence or two, describe the problem you were trying to solve or the reason why your intervention is needed.

There are many healthy options found within the school cafeteria, but sometimes students need to be nudged towards these healthier options. Implementing Smarter Lunchroom strategies in schools helps to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

In a brief paragraph, please share what you implemented and how it made a difference.

In October 2016 the South East Education Cooperative, in partnership with the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative, held a Smarter Lunchrooms Training-of-Trainers. A grant from the Dakota Medical Foundation helped to fund the training. Heidi Kessler from the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (the B.E.N Center) provided the training in both Fargo and Minot. The first day of training was titled, "Healthy Students, Not Healthy Trash Cans". Participants in this session learned about evidence-based, easy-to-use strategies that would increase participation, decrease waste, and increase the amount of healthy food students eat in the lunchroom. The second day of training was solely for those who wanted to become a Smarter Lunchroom Technical Assistance Provider (TAP). After this training there were 15 people trained as a Smarter Lunchroom TAP. In the Spring of 2017 NDSU Extension also held a Smarter Lunchrooms TAP training, and trained county Extension Agents.

Even though we had TAPs across the state ready to help there still seemed to be a lack of awareness around the Smarter Lunchroom principles. In May 2017 a round of "Ready For August in May" trainings were held in Minot, Bismarck and Jamestown. These trainings were provided to food service staff. The focus of this training was to give the basics and provide food service professionals with knowledge and strategies to implement the six principles of behavioral economics used in Smarter Lunchrooms. These include: manage portion sizes, increase convenience, improve visibility, enhance taste expectations, utilize suggestive

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selling, and set smart pricing strategies. At the end of the training each school was asked to complete an action plan and prioritize their top 3 priorities that they plan to implement back in their school in August. Some of these strategy areas included an item to help make it a reality. Some of these items included: a fruit bowl, cup dispenser, water pitcher, menu boards, salad bar signage, window clings, bulletin board, and decorative signage.

Schools were followed-up with in August prior to school starting. Future follow-up is planned to determine how the items received were used, and how their top 3 priorities were being implemented.

Are there any specific NUMBERS or OUTCOMES you can share as a result of your work?

- There was a total of 38 individuals who participated in the sessions.
- 100% of participants indicated that they planned to implement at least 1 Smarter Lunchroom strategy in their school in the upcoming school year
- Over 90% of participants indicated that they would be interested in receiving further technical support from a Smarter Lunchroom TAP
- 100% of participants would recommend the Ready for August training to a colleague
- One thing that participants enjoyed most was interacting, working and conversating with other schools and other food service professionals. The networking and be able to see and talk to other schools on how their kitchen serving lines are run were echoed by the majority of participants.
- Overall there was very positive feedback received:
 - “This was fun and informational, thanks a lot!”
 - “I learned a lot. I would like more training.”

Were there any “AHA” or “lightbulb” moments you can share?

One lightbulb that went off after our first Smarter Lunchroom TAP training was that just having people available to come out to schools and fill out a scorecard and help them implement Smarter Lunchroom strategies is not enough. Direct food service professionals do need that initial Smarter Lunchroom training with those easy to implement strategies, and explaining they why behind each of them. In the end, I do believe that the incentive of the ‘Smarter Lunchroom Kit or items’ did help to get some through the door, but in the end not all of the participants left with all that they could have chosen. Each participant seemed genuinely thankful and grateful for the training that was provided and the items were just an added touch.

Are there any “quotes” from anyone benefitting from this that you can share?

Here were a couple of quotes:

- *“This was some good eye-opening information to help promote our lunch program and make it more successful. Thank you ladies!!”*
- *“I just wanted to let you know I was really inspired by your class yesterday and I am excited to try new things next year. I have already spoken with the Kindergarten teacher about bringing samples of new foods to their classrooms next year for the kids to try before they get into the lunch line and they are very excited about this idea. I am also thinking about a fun “Try Day Friday” once a month for the kids to try a new food and get a sticker or some other reward for trying it. If you hear of any other fun ideas in your other classes please let me know of them because I would love to try and implement them at Longfellow next year!! Thank you again for the inspiration and keep up the good work.”*

Is there anything else you want to share?

This training was developed and facilitated by myself and Lyndsi Engstrom from the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative.

We do plan to do another round of these trainings, and would also like to offer a ‘Part 2’ for the first group trained this school year.