Stepping into Montana’s Smarter Lunchrooms

Hardin School District, Hardin High School

Smarter Lunchrooms Principles Used:

1. Increase visibility
2. Increase convenience
3. Increase taste expectations

Goals:

⇒ Increase intake of fruits and vegetables while decreasing food waste.
⇒ Increase student participation in school lunch program.
⇒ Create a positive working relationship among students and food service staff to improve acceptance of menu items and school lunch program.

Action:

⇒ Started a grab and go lunch meal station for students who don’t want to eat in lunchroom.
⇒ Redesigned the lunchroom by moving the salad bar to the beginning of the lunch line, allowing for easy access and high visibility. (Entrees follow the salad bar.)
⇒ Enhanced marketing of salad bar items with eye catching placement of fruit.
⇒ Placing fruits, vegetables, salads and milk front and center on the a la carte line.
⇒ Using shallower pans on salad bar to decrease waste and leftovers.
⇒ Formed a Student Nutrition Action Committee to increase communication with students and staff to receive recommendations and feedback.

Results:

⇒ Students’ consumption of salad bar items increased by 68 percent.
⇒ Salad bar waste decreased 20 percent from 1 oz. per student to 0.8 oz. per student.
⇒ Increased Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Score by 16 points.
⇒ Student participation in the lunch program continues to increase; up 6.7 percent in the 2015-16 School Year. Community Eligibility Program, additional meals, and increased enrollment are strong influencers.

Next Steps:

⇒ Continue the Student Nutrition Action Committee to ensure continued collaboration between the food service staff and students.
⇒ Effectively brand and market the lunchroom with a “Grand Opening.”
⇒ Continue to expand Smarter Lunchrooms concepts to the other schools in the district.
⇒ Apply for a HealthierUS School Challenge/Smarter Lunchroom award.

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