

Best Practices for Engaging Students in Smarter Lunchrooms:

1. Build a School Lunch Advisory Committee (SLAC)

Creating a School Lunch Advisory Committee (SLAC) is key to beginning the Smarter Lunchrooms process. A SLAC gives middle and high school students the opportunity to get involved and be a positive voice to make changes at their school.

Who should be on a SLAC?

- 5-6 people total
- 2-3 students, as well as school food service staff, teacher(s), and an MSU Extension professional or other community member

Why would students want to be on a SLAC?

- Involvement in the school wellness policy's plan to create a healthier school campus
- Enhance leadership skills
- Build research experience
- Learn new facts and educate others
- Improve communication skills
- Make a difference

How to begin?

- Schedule a meeting to speak with a school administrator and the School Food Service Director along with other interested parties and introduce the subject through a short, interactive presentation.
- Choose 1-2 teachers or adult advisors to mentor the SLAC.

2. Schedule SLAC Meetings

- Designate a convenient time for students, advisors and other members to meet. LUNCH TIME is very convenient; it does not interfere with events outside of school, or require students to devote time out of school hours.
- FALL is the best time of the year, but early SPRING time (January – March) works as well.
- Share leadership responsibility to give everyone the opportunity to guide a meeting.
- Make sure to SET GOALS along with a timeline to keep the SLAC on track and engaged.

3. Encourage Student Participation

- Have INCENTIVES for those attending meetings (examples: school mascot items, gift cards, and energizing food at the meeting).
- The SLAC could be incorporated with an existing CLASS (Family and Consumer Science, Business, or Health) or CLUB (Student Council, Family, Career and Community Leadership Association (FCCLA), or Future Farmers of America (FFA)) to increase involvement with projects or specific tasks based on skills sets or emphasis.
- Design the SLAC as a student-led project from start to finish.

4. Follow This Easy 4 Step Path to Create a Smarter Lunchroom

1. SPOT

- Complete the [Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard](#) and [take pictures](#) of your cafeteria.
- Identify 1-3 strategies from the scorecard and photos to implement in the cafeteria.

2. PLAN

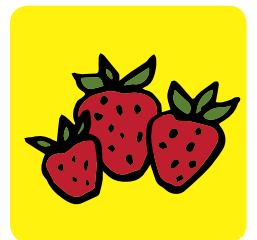
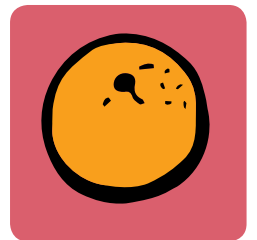
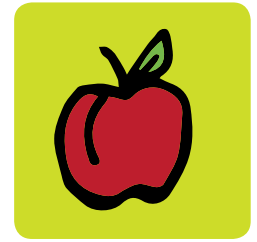
- Use the “SPOT” results and feedback from students to brainstorm changes.
- Create goals and an action plan of all the tasks needed to make the change.

3. DO

- Put the PLAN into action by doing the work.
- Take pre-change measurements to measure success.

4. PROVE

- Take post-change measurements to evaluate effectiveness of the changes.
- Share the results of the project with school and community members.



5. Plan for Continuation

- Wrap up the project with a meeting to OUTLINE future ideas and opportunities.
- MONITOR the current cafeteria atmosphere. Make sure the front-line school food service staff is on-board and supportive of the changes made. This is essential to maintain the changes which were successfully made.
- Post flyers around the school to recruit more people to be involved in the SLAC.
- Send out emails, newspaper articles, flyers, etc. to students and staff to spark interest in the school's meal program.
- Incorporate a SLAC into each semester of an existing business or Family and Consumer Science class.
- Continue providing feedback to the School Food Service Director by completing this process again the following year.
- Seek out other ways to be involved in the school's wellness plan.

6. See Smarter Lunchroom Success Stories and Create Your Own

See how Montana schools are creating smarter lunchrooms with these [Montana Smarter Lunchrooms Success Stories](#).

7. Use a Simple Classroom Lesson to Involve Middle or High School Students in Creating a Smarter Lunchroom

Six Smarter Lunchrooms lessons based upon the 4-Step Path to Building a Smarter Lunchroom are provided. These lessons were designed for high school students in Health Enhancement, Business, or Family and Consumer Science classes. The lessons could be adapted for middle school use. Montana Education Standards for Health Enhancement and Family and Consumer Science are identified for each lesson (this info is provided in an appendix). Each lesson encourages students, teachers, and the School Food Service Director to work together to create positive change in the school lunchroom and measure the effectiveness of simple Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.

Smarter Lunchrooms Lessons include:

1. Redesign the Lunch Line
2. Make Fruits and Vegetables First, Fast, and Fabulous
3. Give Foods Catchy Names
4. Choose a Complete Meal
5. Conduct a Taste Test
6. Taking a Closer Look at Food Waste and Food Selection at School

Tips for using the lessons:

- Learn about the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement prior to teaching a lesson by reviewing the [Smarter Lunchrooms Handbook](#).
- The lessons can be used in any order; they were not designed to be sequential.
- Before starting a lesson, extend an invitation to the School Food Service Director to work together on a Smarter Lunchrooms lesson.
- Choose a lesson that uses a Smarter Lunchrooms strategy the SLAC team and/or the School Food Service Director is able to fulfill.
- Start small by choosing 1 or 2 strategies directly from the Scorecard to try. Working with the School Food Service Director make one change at a time.
- Consider leading one lesson per year as part of an existing Family and Consumer Science, Business, or Health Enhancement class, or with a student club.
- Students' hands-on experience in the lunchroom is essential to the lesson. Consider offering extra credit to students who eat a school lunch meal prior to starting the lesson or schedule a day for the entire class to eat together in the lunchroom as part of the lesson. Arrange a kitchen tour and a school food service staff meet and greet session.

