



Cornell University




Introduction to Behavioral Economics in Food Choices

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement



© BEN Center 2012

It's Not Nutrition.....
Until It's Eaten

Nick Drzal, MPH, RD, MDE, Drzaln@michigan.gov
Mandy Sosnowski, Fraser Public Schools




© BEN Center 2012



Cornell University

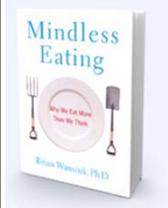


- Food & Brand Lab
 - Consumer Behavior Research
 - Industry and Government Funded
 - How Do Environmental Cues Impact Food Choices
- The BEN Center
 - School Focused Research & Outreach
 - Changes Schools Can Make to Encourage Healthy Choices
 - The Smarter Lunchroom Movement



© BEN Center 2012

Hidden Influences in the daily Diet



Brian Wansink, Ph.D.



- Distractions
 - On average, you will consume 28% more food while eating in front of a computer or TV
- Larger Plate, Larger Meal
 - Using a bigger plate to serve a meal typically results in a 25% increase in the amount of food
- Fat-free?
 - People given low-fat granola ate 35% more than people who thought they were eating regular granola
- Hide the Candy
 - Put that candy dish in your drawer, you'll eat 3 fewer candies per day.



Agenda

- School Lunch Challenge
- Behavioral Economics
- The Smarter Lunchroom Movement
- Michigan Smarter Lunchroom Moves



What do You Think....

- Favorite place to eat out
- List top 5 reasons why



What issues impact changes in School Lunch?

- Rising obesity rates
 - Many blame school lunches
- School lunch administrators under pressure to improve quality and nutrition
 - Cut sugared drinks, dessert items, pizza, hot dogs and burgers
 - Various proponents push for more "whole grain", "vegetarian", "organic" or "raw"
 - Often, these are not what the students want
 - **Heavy-handed or short-sighted intervention can lead to worse outcomes for students and schools**



The School Lunch Challenge

- The Challenge:
 - Improve **nutritional** content of meals
 - Maintain **low cost**
 - Maintain **participation**
 - Encourage longer-term **healthy decisions**
 - **Informing Stake Holders** about what is **REALLY** going on in School Lunchrooms



Choice Architecture

- Choice architecture
 - **Designing the choice** to lead an individual to a particular outcome **without forcing** them
 - Uses the **tools of psychology** to access economic decision-making
- Generally, adjusting the choice architecture is **cheap**
 - **Big bang for the buck**



How Behavioral Economics Helps: Economics and Psychology

- **Reactance**
 - Rebelling against a threat to freedom
 - Limits on ketchup
 - "Don't press this button"
- **Attribution**
 - It was my choice, I will repeat it in the future
 - Choosing between celery and carrots



What We Know About Food Decisions



- We have two decision-making mechanisms
 - **Deliberative** – Rational
 - **Emotional** – Naive, knee-jerk reactions
- Which takes over depends on the level of cognitive resources available
 - Stress or distraction leads us to eat more and eat worse
 - It takes effort and resources to resist temptation



Hot vs. Cold Decisions



- Cold State**
- We consider
 - Prices
 - Health information
 - Logic
 - We buy
 - Smaller portions
 - Moderate foods

- Hot State**
- We eat for
 - Taste
 - Convenience
 - Size
 - Visual effect
 - "This decision is an exception"
 - We buy
 - Bigger
 - More hedonistic



What Does This Mean for Kids?



- Ever wonder why kids food is generally less healthy?
- Kids have not fully developed their rational system
 - Very little understanding of long term consequences
 - Developing understanding of the marketplace
 - Almost like a hot state – all the time
 - Reactance to paternalism
- Fortunately, **most kids find some healthy foods to be appealing and acceptable**
 - We can make some foods cool
 - We can lead them to make the right choice



Hot/Cold Study



- Upstate NY schools which require pre-ordering of lunch items through SmartBoards
- Students who did NOT pre-order were:
 - 11.8% less likely to take a fruit
 - 8.9% more like to take a snack food
 - 25% more likely to take a starchy side



Smarter Lunchrooms



- What if we *design* the lunch room to *gently encourage the decisions we want*?
- Use behavioral theory to *encourage* better choices
- Some of these changes can be *extremely low cost*
- This avoids *reactance*
 - Banning certain foods can be self-defeating
- *Encourages future healthy choices*



Give 'em a Choice!



This?

Or This?



- People report being more satisfied with an option if they have chosen it than if it is forced on them, even when the default option is the what they would have chosen anyway!
- Kids given a choice between carrots and celery **ATE** 91% of the vegetable taken vs. 69% when carrots alone were offered.



Keep it a Choice!



- Requiring kids to take a fruit or vegetable with lunch:
 - Increases consumption by 1 in 10 students
 - Extra cost of \$3 per 10 students
 - 6 in 10 Throw away a veg they would not have otherwise
- Moving salad bar to a central location:
 - Similar increase in consumption
 - No cost



Give Milk the Edge

- Rearranging the coolers to highlight white milk resulted in an increased rate of purchase by approximately **46%**
- Removal of flavored milks in lunchroom caused daily milk sales to decrease nearly **11%**





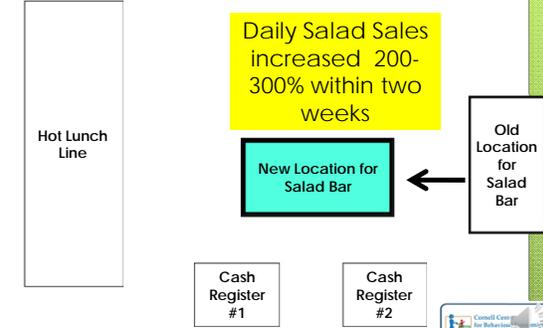
Trigger Foods



- On days when green beans & bananas were on the hot lunch line:
 - Students did NOT take fruits/vegetables were 6% less likely to take a cookie & 11% less likely to take an ice cream
- On days when applesauce & fruit cocktail were on the hot lunch line:
 - The same students were 6% more likely to choose a Little Debbie snack and 15% more likely to choose chips/Slim Jims etc.




Increase Convenience of Healthier Foods



The diagram shows a lunchroom layout with a 'Hot Lunch Line' on the left, two 'Cash Register' locations (#1 and #2) at the bottom, and a 'New Location for Salad Bar' in the center. An arrow points from the 'Old Location for Salad Bar' on the right to the new location. A yellow box above the new location states: 'Daily Salad Sales increased 200-300% within two weeks'.



Test Your Smarter Lunchroom Skills

- What Smarter Lunchroom Technique was used?
- Would this work in your operation?
- Why?
- Why not?
- <https://www.youtube.com/miteamnutrition1>
- Click Playlists
- Select "Smarter Lunchroom Moves"



Michigan Smarter Lunchroom Moves

-  Utilize a Theme to Create a Cool Cafeteria
-  Name that Meal: Themes Boost Mealtime Engagement and Participation
-  Fruit Front-and-Center Drives Sales
-  School Meal Participation Soars with Student Marketing Power
-  Build it and They Will Come: Create & Promote Successful Cafeteria Events
-  Encourage Fruit Sales with Suggestive Selling
-  Involve Students in Caf Operations to Enhance Participation
-  Keep it Short and Simple: Serving Line Efficiency Drives Traffic

<https://www.youtube.com/miteamnutrition1>
 Click Playlists
 Select "Smarter Lunchroom Moves"



Mandy Sosnowski Food Service Director



Mandy.Sosnowski@Fraserk12.org



Marketing 101




- Students in our society are very market savvy.
- Show a kindergartener the McDonalds sign and they know what it is without hesitation.
- The reason why McDonalds is so successful is that they have a consistent brand.
- Customers know that if they go to a McDonalds from one state to another they will find the same Big Mac and same look.
- We have to think like this and create a "brand" in our cafeterias that is clean, consistent and inviting for our students.
- Think about your favorite restaurant. Why is it your favorite? What do you expect when you go there? How does it look? Think about this too when you look at your cafeteria



Step 1-Get your house in order

You might have the best food around but if your place looks unappetizing they won't come in the doors to find out.

Remove the clutter

- Make sure counters, glass, walls, floors & signage are free from stains, dust, food debris, fingerprints.
- Hide items that aren't in use from public view (boxes of gloves, extra food, racks, dirty dishes, etc.)
- Remove extra equipment that isn't in use (hot boxes, carts, etc.)
- Remove personal objects like pictures and crafts from stations.
- Make sure light fixtures are clean and with no burnt out bulbs-it's hard to see product in a dark cooler
- Remove gum from under counters and eating tables
- Paint or touch up walls that have chips or damage on them
- Make sure floors, walls and ceilings are in good condition, free of chips, broken tiles, dead bugs, and other fun surprises



Can you spot the clutter?

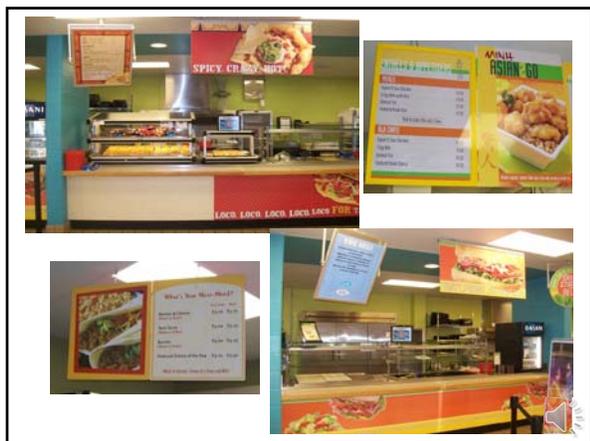


Check your signage



- Make sure it's clean and free of debris, stains.
- Have signs typed, not hand written.
- Have appropriate signage at your stations stating exactly what they get with a meal and with prices for students and staff.
- Use the term "combo or value meal" to convey more for their money.
- Use item descriptors that are enticing like honey glazed carrots instead of just carrots. Do this on menus too.
- Make sure signage is easy to read and understand. Don't throw in terms that they might not understand like a component, instead use food group. Instead of Type A Meal say a combo meal.
- Make sure things like beverages and snacks have clear price labels.
- Use clean & in good condition sign holders. Don't tape up signs. If you must tape something put tape where it cannot be viewed by the customer.
- Make sure all grab and go items are properly labeled with ingredients and use by dates.







Proper Displays



- Make the food your focus-don't put out things like fake food, dried pasta, statues or plants on your lines. This accumulates dust and doesn't do anything to make the food more appetizing.
- Have an appealing display of the different components they can get to make a meal. Include condiments like salsa or veggie toppings to make things more appealing.
- Don't put the same colored foods together. Example: if you have peaches, carrots and shredded cheese next to each other on the salad bar everything looks orange. Put broccoli or cauliflower in between these to avoid the monochromatic look.
- People eat with their eyes first. Make sure your food is in good condition: carrots look white if they dry out so refresh your offerings after each service so the next lunch period gets a fresh batch.
- If you don't serve a lot of something, like beans, switch to smaller pans.



Food Serving Containers



- Have matching utensils and serving platters/pans. Makes things seem more uniform and less chaotic. Provides a clean look.
- Remove soiled, stained and cracked pans/utensils. The money you spend on this helps make your place look branded and professional.
- Don't serve items directly out of the cans or boxes they came in. Put them in bowls, baskets, platters for a cleaner, professional look. It's safer too.
- Have fruit accessible in nice baskets or containers at multiple points of service.
- Remove things like garbage cans or tray returns near where the students get their food. No one likes to look at the garbage as they come in, it's unappetizing.



Professional Staff



- Does your staff look professional?
- Are their uniforms clean, hair up?
- Do their uniforms match?
- Is their look inviting to the students or does it scream out of touch lunch lady?
- Do they greet students with a smile, have information on what's in today's special and suggest what other items might go with the meal?
- Do they thank them for coming?
- How do they handle complaints? Do they challenge the students or are happy to correct the problem?

Step 2 Know Your Customer




- Do they love Mexican food or hate it? Do they love stir fry's or won't touch the stuff? Have you even tried it? You won't know unless you ask them or try it.
- Create a simple survey using surveymonkey, zoomerang or other free survey sites and ask them a few questions on what they like, don't like and want to see.
- Keep track of the trends: Taco Bell launches their Doritos taco line with rave reviews. Do you capitalize on this?
- Where do they eat on the weekends or during a half day? What restaurant in your area do students frequent? Use this to your advantage.
- Try sampling events with suppliers to help introduce new products at little or no risk to your food cost & sales.



Step 3-Fresh Eyes Approach

- Because we see our sites daily we become oblivious to the issues that might be causing us sales.
- Have another food service director from a neighboring district come over and do a “fresh eyes” walk through of your place.
- Don’t get defensive at what they find. Look at a complaint as a gift or a way for you to improve.
- You can also have your staff do this at your different schools.
- You can also utilize an industry vendor or someone from your ISD to do this as well since they have seen a number of sites in their travels
- Go visit another cafeteria for ideas. Most people love to share their ideas and show off their place!



Step 4-Tap Into Resources

- Industry partners like Kellogg’s, General Mills, Tyson, Frito Lay, Pillsbury and others offer branded materials and stations ranging from free to low cost.
- Other items they can provide include things like chip racks, cookie bins, cereal & granola bar holders.
- Since most consumers recognize brand names, ask the providers of these products to help you create counter top signage to advertise these items.
- Take advantage of rebate programs that offer prizes on products you use then take these products and use them as giveaways to help entice students to by a full meal.
- Contact UDIM for materials to help with promote drinking milk
- Some suppliers offer “points” wen you purchase their products. These points can be used on things like marketing materials, products and service ware. Ex: Schwan’s Rewards, Cool School, Food Service Rewards, Dominos Rewards, etc.







Step 5-Self Promote



- Are you the hidden gem of the school? Don't be!
- Use things like social media (Facebook, twitter, etc.) to show just how nice your food & cafeteria looks.
- Take pictures of the daily special and post them on your website, Facebook, Twitter, cable access channel and more with descriptions for parents and students.
- When you're having special events for the students contact local media outlets, like newspapers, and have them come out and try the food or interview the staff and students.
- Bring samples of your new food items to board meetings, parent teacher conferences, PTO/PTA meetings, meet the teacher nights, back to school tailgates & more so that people can try your healthy, tasty food.
- Ask principals to put small "nuggets" of info about your program in their monthly newsletters to help promote your new menu items.





Lunchroom Dining Discussion

If you entered the lunchroom:
What was your initial impression of the serving space? What caught your eye?

What path did you take through the serving space? What environmental cues guided your path?

What did you ultimately decide to buy?

Was it what you intended to buy? Why?



After Lunch:
How did your experience walking through the lunchroom differ now that you are not hungry? Do you notice areas less than before?

Can you see evidence of the 6 principles of Smarter Lunchrooms in action?

If you went through again, would you make the same purchase? Why or why not?

Notes:





D.P.A.E. (Diagnose, Prescribe, Implement, Evaluate) General Observations Checklist

Directions: Rate each aspect "is" for a positive impression, "isn't" for a negative impression, "n/a" for a neutral impression, or "N/A" for not applicable.

<p>Entrance / Approach to lunchroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting comfortable • Attractive healthy-food posters • Menu clear and neat • Noise level • Cleanliness: garbage • Cleanliness: supplies • Odor • Clear traffic pattern • No traffic jams <p>Serving area: rest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu clear and neat • Greeted by lunchroom staff • Cheerful lunchroom staff • Prompted to take F/V • Foods at safe temperature • Food's appearance • Foods at safe temperature • F/V in 2+ locations • F/V easy to reach • White milk soft beverage • Noise level • Cleanliness • Orderly flow • Efficient register • Trays / Cafeteria convenient • No traffic jams 	<p>Serving Area: Cold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu clear and neat • Greeted by lunchroom staff • Cheerful lunchroom staff • Prompted to take F/V • Foods at safe temperature • Food's appearance • Foods at safe temperature • F/V in 2+ locations • F/V easy to reach • White milk soft drink • White milk, front beverage • Noise level • Cleanliness • Orderly flow • Efficient register • Trays / Cafeteria convenient • No traffic jams <p>Serving Area: Search window</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu clear and neat • Greeted by lunchroom staff • Cheerful lunchroom staff • Prompted to take F/V • Foods at safe temperature • Food's appearance • Foods at safe temperature • F/V in 2+ locations • F/V easy to reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White milk soft drink • White milk front beverage • Noise level • Cleanliness • Orderly flow • Efficient register • Trays / Cafeteria convenient • No traffic jams <p>Dining area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear traffic pattern • Lighting comfortable • Attractive healthy-food posters • Tomorrow's menu clear and neat • Noise level • Cleanliness: garbage • Cleanliness: recycling • Cleanliness: composting • Cleanliness: tray return • Cleanliness: register • Odor • Greeted by lunchroom staff • Cheerful lunchroom staff • Monitors circulating • Absentee's rapport with students • Absentee's rapport with staff • Teaching staff present • Administrative staff present • Orderly dismissal • Timely dismissal
---	--	--









 **Smarter Lunchrooms**
Member

Join Team Nutrition

Join the conversation and stay connected.

Like Michigan Team Nutrition on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/michiganteamnutrition

Follow Michigan Team Nutrition on Twitter at
<http://twitter.com/TeamNutritionMI>

Subscribe to the Michigan Team Nutrition Youtube channel:
www.youtube.com/user/miteamnutrition1

Become a Team Nutrition school:
<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/team.html>

 Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs © BEN Center 2012

THANK YOU!

The Smarter Lunchrooms Initiative and the BEN Center

- www.SmarterLunchrooms.org
- Ben@cornell.edu
- @SmarterLunchrooms (Twitter)
- Cornell University Food and Brand Lab:
- Director: Dr. Brian Wansink, wansink@cornell.edu
- Deputy Director: Adam Brumberg, ab697@cornell.edu
- The BEN Center:
- Co-Director: Dr. David Just, dj3@cornell.edu
- BEN Center Manager : Kathryn Hoy MFN, RD, kih7@cornell.edu

 Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs © BEN Center 2012

References

Just, David R. and Brian Wansink (2009). "Better School Meals on a Budget: Using Behavioral Economics and Food Psychology to Improve Meal Selection," *Choices*, 24:3, 1-6.

Just, David R. and Brian Wansink (2011). "School Lunch Debit Cards are Associated with Lower Nutrition and Higher Calories," under review at *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Wansink, Brian, and David Just (2011). "Healthy Foods First: Students Take the First Lunchroom Food 11% More Often Than the Third," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43:451, 59.

Wansink, Brian, David R. Just, and Joe McKendry (2010). "Lunch Line Redesign," *New York Times*, October 22, p. A10.

Wansink, Brian, David R. Just, and Collin R. Payne (2012). "The Behavioral Economics of Healthier School Lunch Payment Systems," under review at *Journal of Marketing*.

Wansink, Brian, David Just, and Laura Smith (2011). "Move the Fruit: Putting Fruit in New Bowls and New Places Doubles Lunchroom Sales," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43:451, 51.

Wansink, Brian, Koert van Ittersum, and James E. Painter (2005). "How Descriptive Food Names Bias Sensory Perceptions in Restaurants," *Food Quality and Preference*, 16:5, 393-400.

Wansink, Brian, David Just, and Laura Smith (2011). "What is in a Name? Giving Descriptive Names to Vegetables Increases Lunchroom Sales," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43:451, 51.

 Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs © BEN Center 2012
