

Important Note: This activity was developed for the original Green Lunchroom Challenge program, a voluntary pledge program for K-12 schools to improve the sustainability of their food service



operations. The project was coordinated by the [Illinois Sustainable Technology Center Technical Assistance Program](#) with funding from US EPA Region 5.

The following page(s) represent the content of this activity as it appeared on the original project web site, complete with available points and instructions for submitting documentation. **The project is no longer funded and as of June 2018 schools may no longer submit activity documentation to earn points and recognition as described.** The activity is presented for your information to guide your organization's sustainability efforts.

If your school or district implements the suggested activity and wishes to share its experiences, please email [Joy Scrogum](#). Your story may be incorporated into a blog post on this web site, the main ISTC site, or shared on social media to foster networking and inspiration among peer institutions.

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Alter placement of food choices to encourage selection of most nutritious food for the day

Activity Category: Food Presentation

Activity: Alter placement of food choices to encourage selection of most nutritious food for the day

Rationale: Humans are creatures of convenience. Supermarkets know this, and put candy, gum, and other small items you might not even look for during your shopping trip near the cash register to encourage “impulse buying” as you’re waiting in line to check out; it’s easy to consider and pick up such items while you wait. Similar tactics can be employed in school lunchrooms to encourage students to select healthier items that might otherwise be passed over. Supermarkets also use the fact that humans are drawn to visually pleasing items, and your lunchroom can use that too. Healthier items like fruits or vegetables can be moved to positions where they are easy to see and reach, and offerings can be placed to create color contrast that makes a particular item stand out. Strategic placement of food items can encourage selection and add to the overall perceived appeal of healthier choices, making it less likely that these items will be wasted.



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Activity Description: Read the material linked to in the “Resources” section below and select 1-3 placement strategies to try at your school. Experiment with these placement strategies, observing selection and consumption of the items in question both before and after their movement to a “strategic location.” (If you’re trying to promote white milk selection, observe what happens when white milk is less than 1/3 of the drinks in a cooler and when it is at least 1/3 of the drinks in a cooler.) Your comparison of consumption amounts may include any combination of visual assessment or physical sorting of trash/tray waste, information from point-of-sale systems, and observations of food service/lunchroom staff. See the “Tray Waste” video in the “Resources” section below for tips on measuring tray waste. (To assess wastage of milk, have student place milk cartons, empty or not in a designated tub or on a special table so lunchroom staff can assess its consumption.) **Note: This activity may only be completed once for a total of 100 points, even if more than one placement strategy is tried.** Multiple strategies may be reported on, but you will not receive double points for trying two

strategies or triple points for trying three.

Earn Challenge Points (100 points): Write a report summarizing the results of your placement experiments), in Word or PDF format, including the following information:

-  The food item(s) with which you experimented
-  What you altered to encourage selection of the item(s)
-  2-6 photos illustrating the “before” and “after” conditions of your placement experiments
-  A summary of the results of selection and consumption of the food item under the different placement conditions. Did the placement changes result in waste reduction? If not, do you think some modification of the situation would have created waste reduction?
-  Whether your school/district will try this technique again

Your report should be 2-6 pages in length and should be emailed to Joy Scrogum at jscrogum@illinois.edu.

Resources:

-  [Smarter Lunchrooms: Make the entrée with the greatest nutrient density the first or most prominent in line](#)
-  [Smarter Lunchrooms: Display the Whole Fruit](#)
-  [Smarter Lunchrooms: Display Fruit Near the Register](#)
-  [Smarter Lunchrooms: Make sure White Milk accounts for at least 1/3 of drinks displayed in each cooler](#)
-  [Smarter Lunchrooms video: Tray Waste](#) (helpful in measuring tray waste)
-  [Move the Fruit: Putting Fruit in New Bowls and New Places Doubles Lunchroom Sales](#)
-  [Ohio Smarter Lunchrooms Movement](#) (See “Northridge Middle and High School, Northridge Local Schools, Montgomery County SALAD BAR RELOCATION INCREASES VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION”)
-  [Disrupting the Default Choice: The Contentious Case of Chocolate Milk](#)
-  [Healthy Convenience: Nudging Students to Make Healthier Choices in the Lunchroom](#)
-  [Healthy Foods First: Students Take the First Lunchroom Food 11% More Often Than the Third](#)

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