

RAPID EVALUATION

Mississippi Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Initiative Description

To address overweight and unhealthy eating, the Mississippi Department of Education selected 25 schools throughout Mississippi to serve as program sites for fruit and vegetable distribution free of charge. The primary goals of the program were to

- Increase students' consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Help educate students about the importance of good nutrition.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program measured

- Changes in the variety of fruits and vegetables students ate during the school year.
- Changes in students' attitudes toward fruits and vegetables during the school year.
- Changes in students' degree of preference for fruits and vegetables during the school year.

The extent to which students' consumption of fruits and vegetables changed.

The evaluation involved 725 students in grades 5, 8, and 10 from 5 of the 25 schools that participated in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot program in the 2004–2005 school year.

Findings

As compared with the beginning of the school year

- Students' familiarity with fruits and vegetables increased across all grade levels.
- Eighth-grade students reported more positive attitudes toward eating fruits and vegetables, beliefs that they could eat more fruit, and willingness to try new fruits.
- Preferences for fruit increased among 8th- and 10th-grade students.
- Intentions to eat fruit increased among 10th-grade students.
- Eighth- and 10th-grade students' consumption of fruit in school increased.
- Eighth- and 10th-grade students' intake of vitamin C increased in and out of school, and intake of dietary fiber increased in school.

Implications

This program may have helped to increase student exposure to fruits and vegetables across all grade levels. It also may have had effects on 8th- and 10th-grade students' attitudes, preferences for, and intentions to eat fruit. It appears to have helped increase 8th- and 10th-grade students' consumption of fruit during the school year. This was a popular program that appears to have increased awareness of the importance of consuming fruits and vegetables among students, parents, and school staff and administrators. Such a program may be a useful part of school-based initiatives to improve students' nutritional choices.

The Public Health Problem

Overweight and consumption of unhealthy foods are problems among youth in Mississippi.

Greater consumption of fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk for chronic disease. In 2007

- 18% of high school students in Mississippi were obese.
- Less than 1 of 5 (19%) high school students in Mississippi ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times a day.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Adolescent and School Health

