

## **Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption through a Cafeteria Role Model Program**

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**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Public health professionals with an interest in school-based health

**ABSTRACT:** Childhood hunger is a prevalent issue in Klamath County. Approximately 25% of Klamath County children are food insecure compared to 19% of children nationwide. Children in the Mills Addition are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity as 91% of Mills Elementary students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, and 25% of children in this neighborhood live below the poverty level. Food waste is also an issue in the Mills cafeteria, with a median of 51%, 63%, and 42% of fruit, vegetable, and total food wasted respectively in 2016. A Cafeteria Role Model (CRM) program was implemented during the 2016/2017 academic year to combat both issues. Student externs spent 10 weeks observing student cafeteria behavior. Externs observed that Mills students were not encouraged or incentivized to eat cafeteria fruits and vegetables during lunch. They hypothesized that encouragement and the introduction of minor incentives would increase fruit and vegetable consumption. They developed a Cafeteria Role Model (CRM) program. The externs spent 2-3 days a week over 20 weeks delivering the intervention, which included role modeling healthy eating habits and providing positive encouragement and incentives for eating fruits and vegetables. Plate waste was assessed before and after using a hybrid quarter waste and picture method. Significant differences were found at the zero and one hundred percentiles for fruit, and at zero for vegetables, suggesting the program was effective at reducing fruit and vegetable waste.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** The audience will identify a creative and hands-on method of influencing students to be healthier.

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