Support to Extend SNAP-Ed Eligibility to Schools Below the Current Threshold of 50% Participation in Free and Reduced School Lunch Program

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Learning Outcome: Participants will be able to indicate differences in characteristics and nutrition-related outcomes among free and reduced school lunch participation rate categories and assess appropriateness of revising the current SNAP-Ed school eligibility policy.

Objective: SNAP-Ed policy requires free and reduced school lunch participation rates (FRLPR) to be ≥50%, impeding district-wide relationship building. This study explored extending SNAP-Ed to schools with FRLPR <50%.

Methods: Baseline data from an impact assessment [Cohort 1 (C1) n=415; Cohort 2 (C2) n=352; C1/C2 ≥75% white] were compared from 8 schools with varying FRLPR categories: <50% vs ≥50%; <46% vs ≥46%; <46% vs 46-49% vs ≥50%. Student measures: fruit/vegetable preference (FVP, VP), attitude toward cooking, cooking self-efficacy (SE). Parents [C1 n=86; C2 n=141] were assessed on fruit/vegetable availability (FVA), modeling healthful mealtimes, SE. Differences among FRLPR categories were compared using GLM controlling for categorical differences.

Results: FRLPR were congruent with food security concerns. Student characteristics were similar among FRLPR categories. C2 FRLPR category differences were significant for parent BMI, education, and gender. C1 and C2 parent FVA, SE and modeling did not differ among FRLPR groups. C1 and C2 student outcomes were similar between FRLPR groups. C1 ≥50% FRLPR attitude was more positive than <50% FRLPR (p=.032). C2 FVP, VP were higher in students with <50% FRLPR (FVP 65.3±11.7 vs 61.9±12.9 p=.014; VP 36.6±8.2 vs 33.8±9.4 p=.007) and < 46% FRLPR (FVP 65.4±11.9 vs 62.6±12.4 p=.033; VP 36.7±8.4 vs 34.5±8.9 p=.017). Students in 46-49% FRLPR were more similar to ≥50% FRLPR students.

Conclusions: Few significant differences in outcomes were observed for students or parents among FRLPR categories, thereby supporting review of the policy that restricts SNAP-Ed benefits to schools with ≥50% FRLPR.

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