

## **Impact of a youth advocacy intervention on teachers' nutrition knowledge and classroom food practices relevant to snacks in rural elementary/middle schools**

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PRESENTATION FORMAT: Oral Presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Individuals interested in child nutrition and/or school food environments

### **ABSTRACT:**

Background: School environments and teachers play important roles in helping children establish healthful eating behaviors. We describe the impact of SNACZ, a youth advocacy program for improving rural school food environments, on teachers' nutrition knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices relevant to snacks.

Methods: SNACZ was a quasi-experimental trial involving eight rural elementary/middle schools (5 intervention, 3 control). Students at intervention schools participated in SNACZ clubs where they planned and implemented 10 outreach projects over a 3-year period to promote healthier school practices relevant to snacking. We assessed intervention effects on teachers' snack-related knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices using a pre-post questionnaire.

Results: The intervention was significantly associated with lower use of pizza and sweetened drinks among teachers as rewards/incentives for students ( $p=0.049$ ;  $p=0.020$ ). More intervention teachers disagreed that students should be provided with the snacks they want at school ( $p=0.030$ ) and recognized that high-fat foods did not offer students with extra calories needed to grow ( $p=0.030$ ). Also, the mean score for all nutrition knowledge items combined was substantially higher (improved) for intervention teachers ( $p=0.062$ ).

Conclusions: Involving youth in advocacy for a healthier school food environment can improve teachers' nutrition knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices relevant to snacks.

OBJECTIVE(S): Describe the impact of the SNACZ intervention on teachers' nutrition knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices relevant to snacks.

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