

High School Students' Opinions on Nutrition Information at Point of Selection



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PURPOSE

To determine the opinions of high school students regarding nutrition information at the point of selection and the influence the information will have in their decision to make healthy food choices.

METHOD

- Researchers developed focus group questions for use in three high schools in three USDA regions (Midwest, Southeast, and Southwest).
- Focus group sessions were conducted in each high school with 9th and 10th grade girls, 9th and 10th grade boys, 11th and 12th grade girls, and 11th and 12th grade boys for a total of 38 girls and 35 boys participating in the sessions.

RESULTS

- Girls and boys thought nutrition information might affect their food choices and girls were more interested in seeing nutrition information for all menu items and entrees.
- Boys were more likely to want nutrition information for entrees only and more likely to state that taste was more important than nutrition in choosing menu items.
- Girls and boys mentioned calories, fat, protein, carbohydrates as nutrients of interest and boys were more likely to want protein and vitamin information posted.
 - Girls wanted the nutrition information available near the food and on a Web site but most boys wanted it near the entrance to the line.
 - Both groups thought nutrition information should be provided for individual menu items instead of a reimbursable meal because there are many choices.
 - Girls were more likely than boys to say that providing nutrition information would increase their trust and satisfaction with the school nutrition program.
 - Some students reported a distrust of school menu items and ingredients used in school menu items.

APPLICATION TO CHILD NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS

School nutrition directors can provide nutrition information in their high schools as a means of increasing trust and satisfaction with their program and as an important component of the wellness policy.



FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND SELECTED COMMENTS

Would having nutrition information change your choices?

High School Girls

- *It would help me figure out what to eat on certain days*
- *It would help with how much insulin*
- *Probably not*
- *I won't take the time to read it*

High School Boys

- *I think it would*
- *I'm trying to gain weight so it would*
- *Probably not; I'm very active so I can eat anything*
- *If it tastes good, I eat it*

Would providing nutrition information increase your confidence in the school nutrition program?

High School Girls

- *Yes, definitely*
- *It would increase my trust*
- *It would help with allergies*
- *Probably*

High School Boys

- *You would know something about what you're eating*
- *I think it would if the nutrition (information) was good*
- *No*
- *It would still taste the same*

Would providing nutrition information improve the image of the school nutrition program as providing nutritious meals?

High School Girls

- *I like to eat healthy but I like to have my junk*
- *It would show they put thought in it*
- *Yes, if they provide it (nutrition information), then they don't have anything to hide*

High School Boys

- *Yes*
- *Yes, by seeing the nutrition information, we can agree with what is being promoted as nutritious meals*
- *Yes, I think it would but they could still put stuff in*

What was the most important topic discussed?

High School Girls

- *Having the ability to know the nutrition of what we're eating so we can eat healthier*
- *The look of the food*
- *The fact that you're hearing our opinion*
- *Having nutrition information available so you can see it*

High School Boys

- *Nutrition labels*
- *Variety of foods*
- *Taste of food*
- *Creating a nutritious environment*